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A KING IN THE TRENCHES

How Britain rallied to the royals in the First World War

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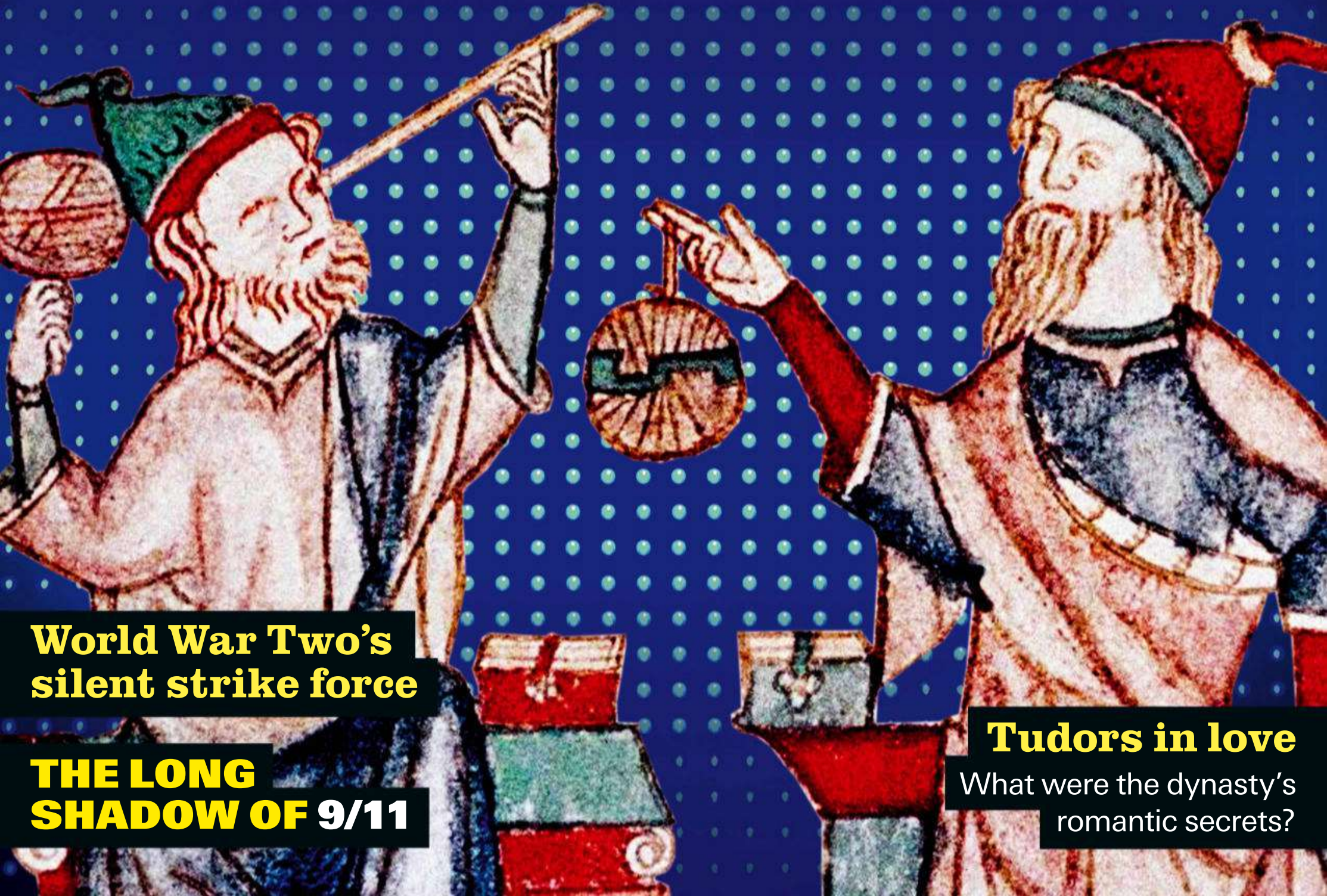
RACISM ON THE PITCH

The history of **prejudice in football**

THE (SURPRISINGLY) MODERN MIDDLE AGES

From pandemics to world-changing technology, why the medieval period is more familiar than we might think



World War Two's silent strike force

THE LONG SHADOW OF 9/11

Tudors in love

What were the dynasty's romantic secrets?

This was Sylvia's promise to you...

A generation ago, a woman named Sylvia made a promise. As a doctor's secretary, she'd watched stroke destroy the lives of so many people. She was determined to make sure we could all live in a world where we're far less likely to lose our lives to stroke.

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Stroke Association

WELCOME

OCTOBER 2021

BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE

"Turn on the news nowadays and there's a fair chance the headlines will be dominated by stories about the pandemic, climate change, migration, and the transformations being wrought by information technology. These might seem like very modern preoccupations, but they are centuries old. As Dan Jones highlights in this month's cover feature, our **medieval forebears faced very similar challenges** to us, with equally dramatic results. Turn to page 22 for that.

Dan is also one of the contributors to a fascinating new book, edited by the historians Helen Carr and Suzannah Lipscomb, entitled *What Is History, Now?* I well remember reading EH Carr's seminal *What Is History?* during my student days, and now, on the 60th anniversary of its publication, the topic is being revisited for a new generation. On page 29, we've interviewed Helen (EH Carr's great-granddaughter) and Suzannah about the book and what they feel the **purpose of history is in the 21st century**.

When the history of the 21st century itself comes to be written, the **9/11 attacks on the US** will surely feature prominently. As well as the terrible loss of life, the terrorist atrocity also led to major changes to American domestic and foreign policy, with ramifications felt across the globe. But when the dust settles, how will historians remember 9/11 – did it in fact change the course of history? On page 60 David Reynolds offers his view, as we reach the attack's 20th anniversary.

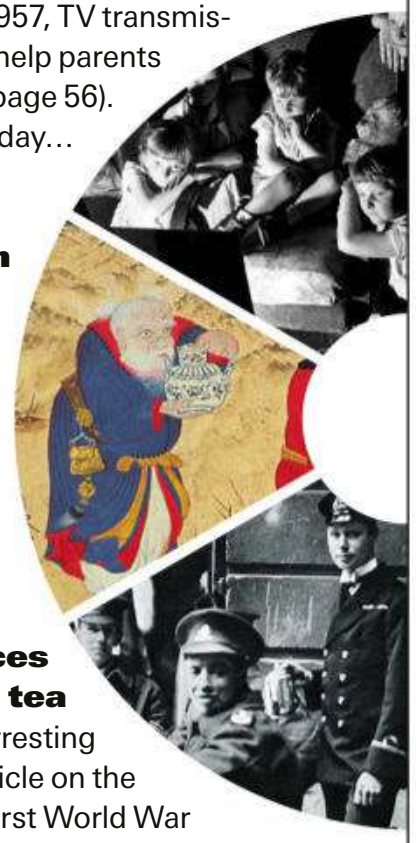
Rob Attar
Editor

THREE THINGS I'VE LEARNED THIS MONTH

1. TV was turned off for toddlers
I had not heard before of the so-called Toddlers' Truce, where, until 1957, TV transmissions were paused to help parents get their kids to bed (page 56). No such luck today…

2. Globalisation began early
A stand-out fact for me from Dan Jones' feature is the assertion that in around AD 1000 goods could, theoretically, travel between every continent, except Antarctica (page 27).

3. Princes poured tea
Among many arresting details in the article on the royals in the First World War is the story of Prince Albert (the future George VI) carrying a teapot around at Buckingham Palace parties for wounded soldiers (page 37).



THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

Heather Jones
"The term 'For King and Country' kept appearing in the First World War documents I was working on. I became curious as to what the monarchy actually meant to people during the conflict." **Heather considers how the royals emerged from the horrors of war stronger than ever** **on page 34**

Tristram Hunt
"As an MP for Stoke-on-Trent, I was surrounded by the memory of Josiah Wedgwood in statues, streets, descendants and pottery workers. Now, as director of the V&A, I have the privilege of admiring his design brilliance every day at work." **Tristram shines a light on the radical messages the potter planted on his ceramics** **on page 42**

Sarah Gristwood
"I've long been fascinated by the enduring ideal of courtly love – and when I realised that the Tudors were, too, it gave me a fresh insight into our most famous dynasty." **Sarah explores how the Tudor monarchs used courtly love to their advantage** **on page 50**

Dan Jones
"Historian Barbara Tuchman once called the 14th century a 'distant mirror' on the 20th. I want to show you how the Middle Ages reflect 21st-century concerns, too. We're not as far from medieval people as we think…" **Dan compares the issues that affected our medieval ancestors with modern concerns** **on page 22**

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14TH-CENTURY ILLUSTRATION SHOWING GERMAN SCHOLAR HERMANN OF REICHENAU WITH AN ASTROLABE (RIGHT) AND THE GREEK MATHEMATICIAN EUCLID (LEFT): AKG-IMAGES. BACKGROUND: GETTY IMAGES. KING GEORGE V: GETTY IMAGES. THIS PAGE: OLIVER EDWARDS/PETER CLARK/STEVE SAYERS/WILL WHITTAKER/GETTY IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN

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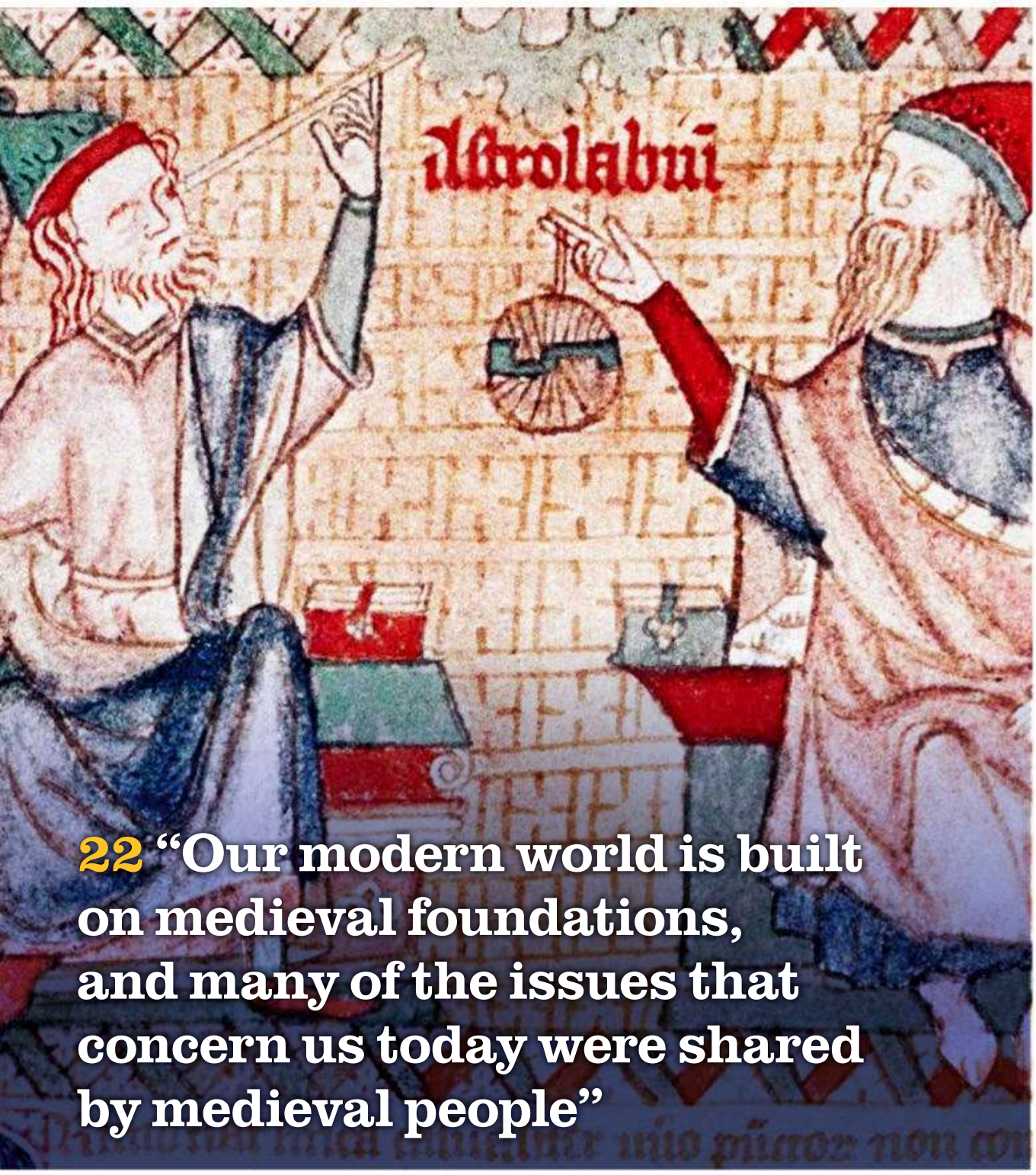
22 “Our modern world is built on medieval foundations, and many of the issues that concern us today were shared by medieval people”

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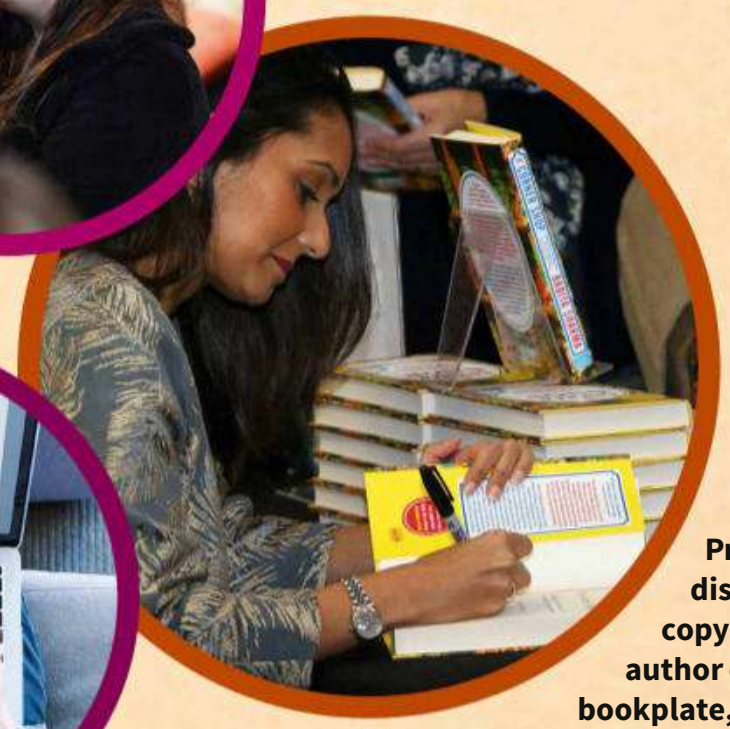

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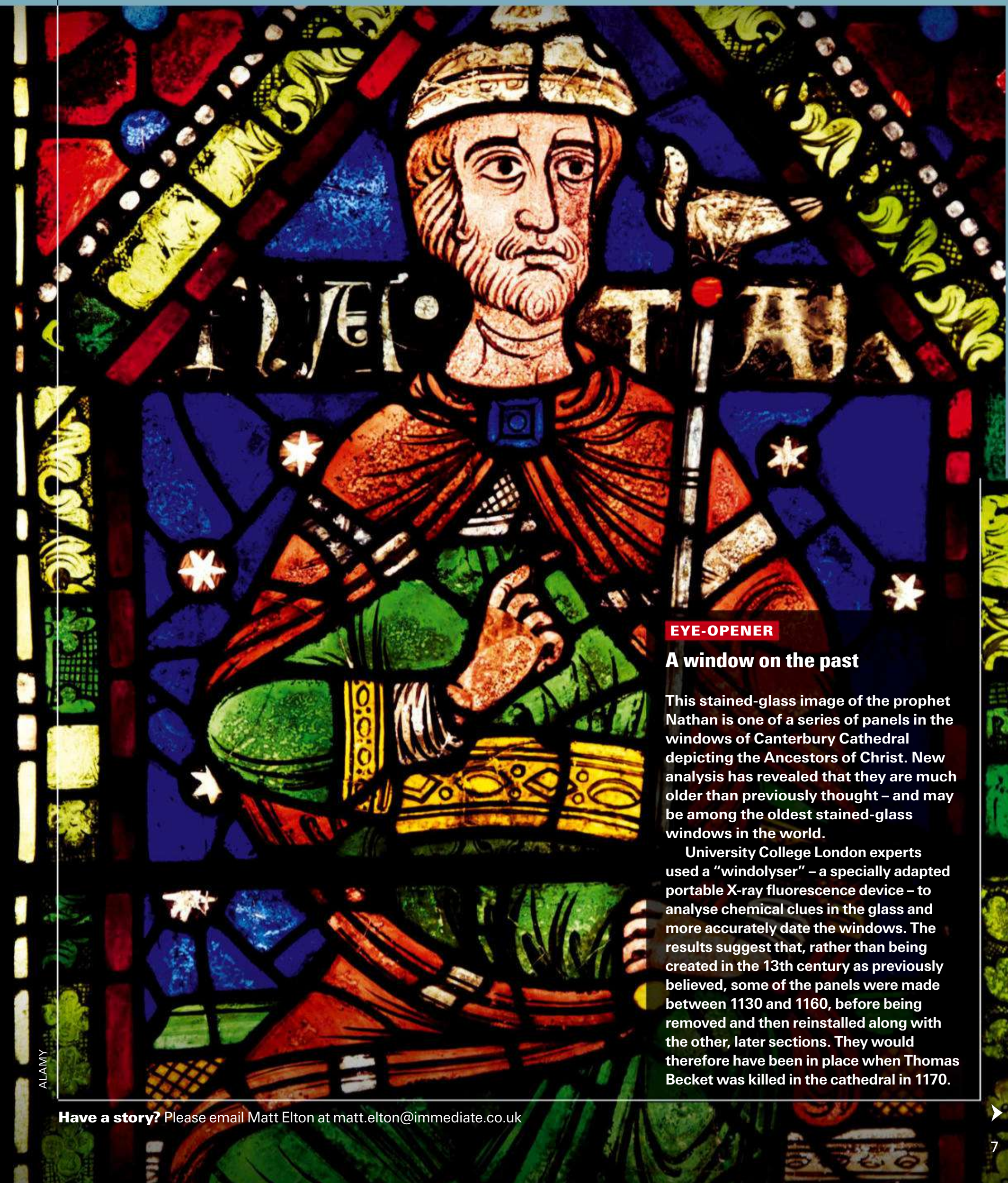
THIS MONTH IN HISTORY



ALAMY

EYE-OPENER

A window on the past

This stained-glass image of the prophet Nathan is one of a series of panels in the windows of Canterbury Cathedral depicting the Ancestors of Christ. New analysis has revealed that they are much older than previously thought – and may be among the oldest stained-glass windows in the world.

University College London experts used a "windolyser" – a specially adapted portable X-ray fluorescence device – to analyse chemical clues in the glass and more accurately date the windows. The results suggest that, rather than being created in the 13th century as previously believed, some of the panels were made between 1130 and 1160, before being removed and then reinstalled along with the other, later sections. They would therefore have been in place when Thomas Becket was killed in the cathedral in 1170.

Have a story? Please email Matt Elton at matt.elton@immediate.co.uk

TALKING POINTS
Foundational stories

One historian's trip from the UK to the US sparked much Twitter debate about why the two nations' histories are each dominated by a single story. **ANNA WHITELOCK** reviewed the exchanges

Having made it to the US earlier this summer, American-born historian and author **Hallie Rubenhold** (@HallieRubenhold) observed on a visit to a bookshop that she "never ceases to be amazed by the American obsession with the 'founding fathers'. Same stories, told over and over. Much like the UK's obsession with the Second World War, it really is time to get people interested in other aspects of our rich historical human experience." An innocuous observation, one might think – but that's not how it went down on Twitter. Amid genuinely shocking abuse of Hallie, some interesting intercontinental conversation ensued.

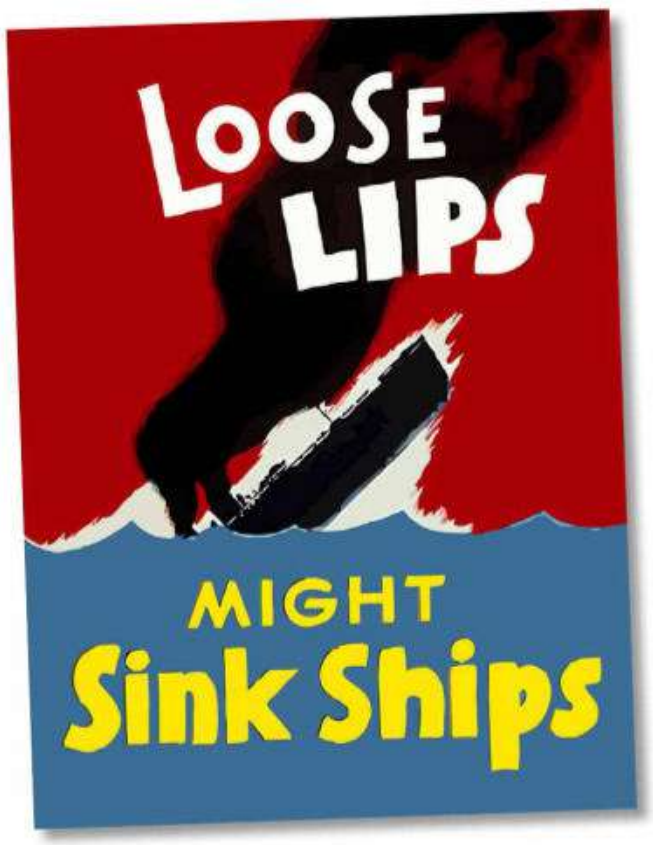
One strand of the debate considered how helpful it was that the two nations' histories are dominated by those two stories. **Lauren** (@starlingspecks) commented: "there are so many myths attached to our involvement that have had and continue to have unhelpful political ramifications and do a disservice to the actual events of the Second World War. It needs to be left alone for a while." And **Kevin Cannell** (@Bevni81), wrote: "I'm as interested in the Second World War… as anyone, but what's really exciting is finding out about new people, places and stories. I don't need to feel like an expert on a subject before I read about it, I just want to learn about new things."

Join the debate at **twitter.com/historyextra**

Looking across the Atlantic, **David McNab** (@david_mcnab) suggested that, in the US, the founding fathers are akin to "a secular religion. The president is also treated like a demigod who walks through mortals. Similarly, the constitution is treated much like the Bible: a sacred text to be interpreted to support whatever prejudice you enjoy." **Eoin Forde** (@EoinFordeeoin) thought it "amazing how so little [attention] in comparison is given over to the history of America before it was the New World, or the subsequent extermination of its peoples".

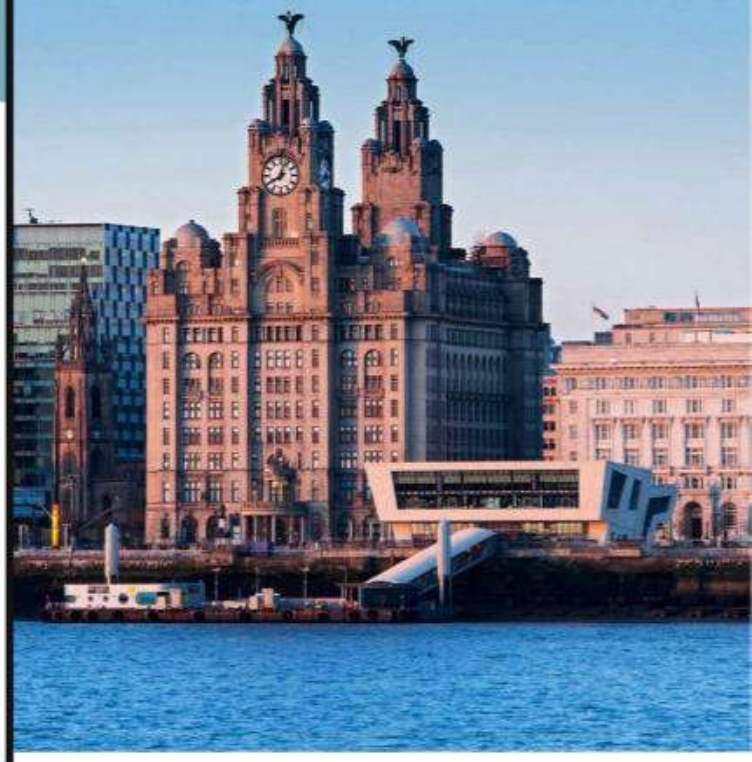
Other users considered why the stories had come to command such attention. **Charles Hoskinson** (@cehoskinson) made the point that "those wars and leaders shaped the landscape in which the other stories existed, and thus are a prerequisite to understanding anything else. And they are the 'gateway drug' to a lifelong love of history for many people, including me." **Ruth Ware** (@RuthWareWriter) questioned the extent to which it's helpful to compare the attention given to the Second World War with that granted the founding fathers: "When you grow up, as I did, with grandparents still bearing physical marks of wounds [and] amputations, it's very hard not to think about that. Nobody alive remembers the founding fathers."

And so it went on. Last word should probably go to **Hiking Historian** (@HikingHistorian), who stirred the pot by writing: "The UK absolutely does not have an obsession with the Second World War. We have an innate Dunkirk spirit; Churchillian bulldog tenacity; we're little spitfires in the face of adversity. Oh wait. I see what you mean…" H



A poster from the Second World War. Does Britain harbour an unhealthy obsession with its struggle against the Nazis?

Anna Whitelock is chair in history at City, University of London



The Royal Liver Building at Liverpool's Pier Head. A Unesco committee argued that development has reduced the heritage value of the city's waterfront

UNESCO

Liverpool stripped of World Heritage status

Liverpool has lost its World Heritage status, with Unesco asserting that recent development of the city's Victorian waterfront had led to a "serious deterioration" of the site.

The ruling, made following a secret ballot by a Unesco committee in July, cited plans for a new stadium for Everton Football Club, to be built at Bramley-Moore Dock, as one of the developments reducing the heritage value of the city's waterfront. Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City was added to the World Heritage List in 2004, allowing it access to UN conservation funding and protection under the Geneva convention. It's only the third site in the world to be stripped of its status, following Oman's Arabian Oryx Sanctuary in 2007 and the Dresden Elbe Valley in Germany in 2009.

Responding to the decision, Liverpool's mayor Joanne Anderson said she was "hugely disappointed and concerned", and that the council was considering launching an appeal.

The city is not the only UK site whose Unesco status has been called into question in recent weeks. Also in July, Unesco warned that Stonehenge would be added to its World Heritage in Danger List and could be stripped of its status if work begins on a planned road tunnel nearby. However, a high court ruling has since deemed the plans to be unlawful, citing flaws in the government decision-making process and a failure to fully consider alternative options. The project is now paused while officials consider how to proceed. H

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HISTORY IN THE NEWS

A selection of the stories hitting the **history headlines**

This cave house in Derbyshire features three rooms and its own east-facing oratory, or chapel

▲ Cave could be "UK's first intact domestic interior"

It may have few of the home comforts that we now associate with domestic life – yet experts believe that a cave house in Derbyshire, with a floor, roof, doors and windows, could be Anglo-Saxon – and possibly Britain's oldest intact domestic dwelling.

Anchor Church Caves, between Foremark and Ingleby, were previously believed to be 18th-century follies. However, new research suggests that the site is instead more likely to date from the ninth century. Archaeologists from the Cultural Heritage Institute at the Royal Agricultural University, together with Wessex Archaeology, used drone technology to help draw a detailed plan of the cave house, with its three rooms and east-facing chapel. The findings suggest that the cave's narrow doorways and windows, hewn from rock, closely resemble Saxon architecture.

Although the identity of its original occupant remains a mystery, experts point to a 16th-century book containing a reference to a cliff residence of "Saint Hardulph" – potentially King Eardwulf, who ruled over Northumbria from AD 796 to 806.

ALAMY/THE HRE GROUP/GETTY IMAGES

▲ Concreting of Victorian arch may have to be reversed

Hundreds of tonnes of concrete poured under a Victorian railway arch earlier this year may have to be removed following a council ruling. The structure (pictured above), near the village of Great Musgrave in Cumbria, was "infilled" in May as part of a Highways England (HE) initiative to reinforce more than 100 such structures deemed unsafe. Eden District Council has now told HE that it needs to apply for retrospective planning permission for the work and that, if denied, the concrete would need to be removed.

Experts chart impact of medieval climate change ▼

The ways in which shifting weather patterns affected the lives of people in the medieval era are to be explored in a new project. The research will focus on Caerlaverock Castle in southern Scotland (pictured below), which replaced another structure built closer to the coast in 1229. It's thought the original castle was abandoned after huge marine storms hit, which may have altered the shape of the coastline or the nature of the terrain. Experts from the University of Stirling will examine soil sediments in a bid to trace the storms' "environmental legacy" and, potentially, reveal the reasons behind the relocation.

WW2 deportation of Chinese sailors to be investigated ▼

The treatment of Chinese merchant sailors by the UK after the Second World War is to be investigated by the Home Office. Around 2,000 seamen who worked on British ships transporting supplies from the US were forcibly repatriated from Liverpool after the conflict ended, despite many having married British women. Government minister Kevin Foster expressed "deep regret that some of those who faced the most extreme dangers of war to keep our country supplied in its darkest hour were treated in this way".

Chinese seamen in 1942. The Home Office is set to investigate the expulsion of sailors after WW2

Ancient observatory in Peru gains listed status ▼

An enormous solar observatory built in Peru between 250 and 200 BC (pictured right) has gained Unesco World Heritage status. Chankillo, set in a desert valley near the coast, features 13 towers that functioned as viewing points from which to chart the arcs of the rising and setting sun – and, as a result, calculate equinoxes, solstices and the current point in the solar calendar. Despite its sophistication, little is known about the civilisation that built the observatory. Indeed, after the site was abandoned – likely in the first century AD – it remained largely forgotten until the 19th century. H

Prejudice on the pitch

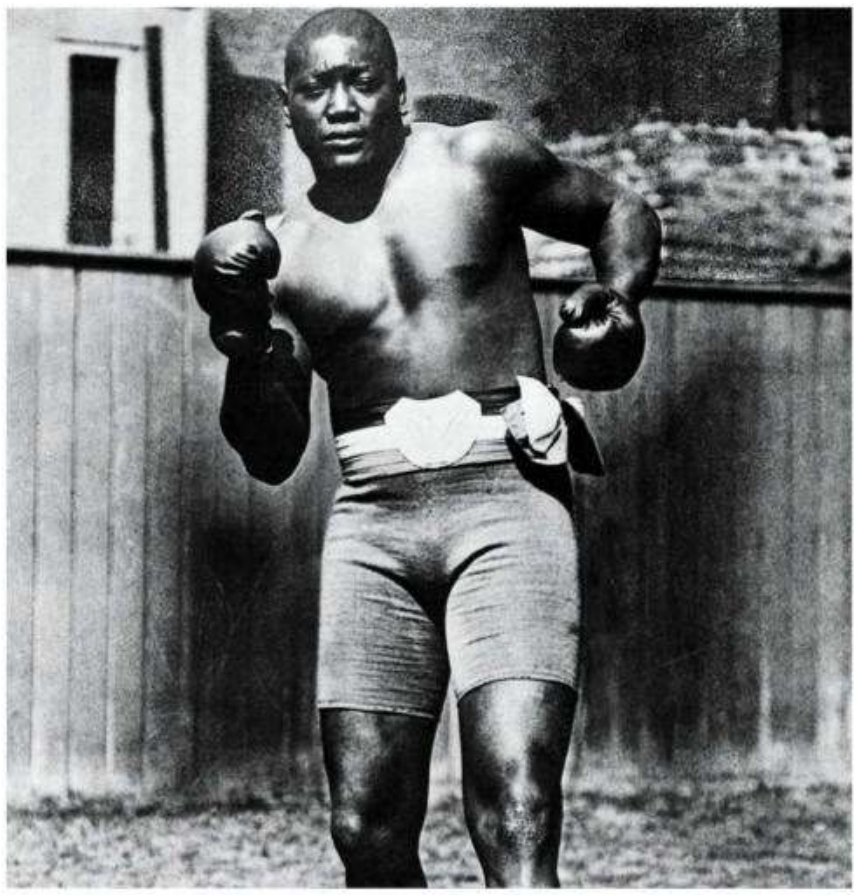
The racist abuse experienced by some of England's black footballers after the team's defeat in the Euro 2020 championship final in July thrust the issue of racism in the sport back into the spotlight. **MATTHEW TAYLOR** charts the causes and consequences of more than a century of discrimination

England's football dream may have been dashed when the team was narrowly defeated by Italy in the Uefa European Championship final at Wembley in July, but the most concerning outcome of the match was the racist abuse directed at the three young black players – Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka – who missed England's penalties. A barrage of racist comments were posted on social media, a mural dedicated to Rashford in Manchester was vandalised, and several youth players at Portsmouth FC were sacked for sharing discriminatory comments about the trio in a private group chat.

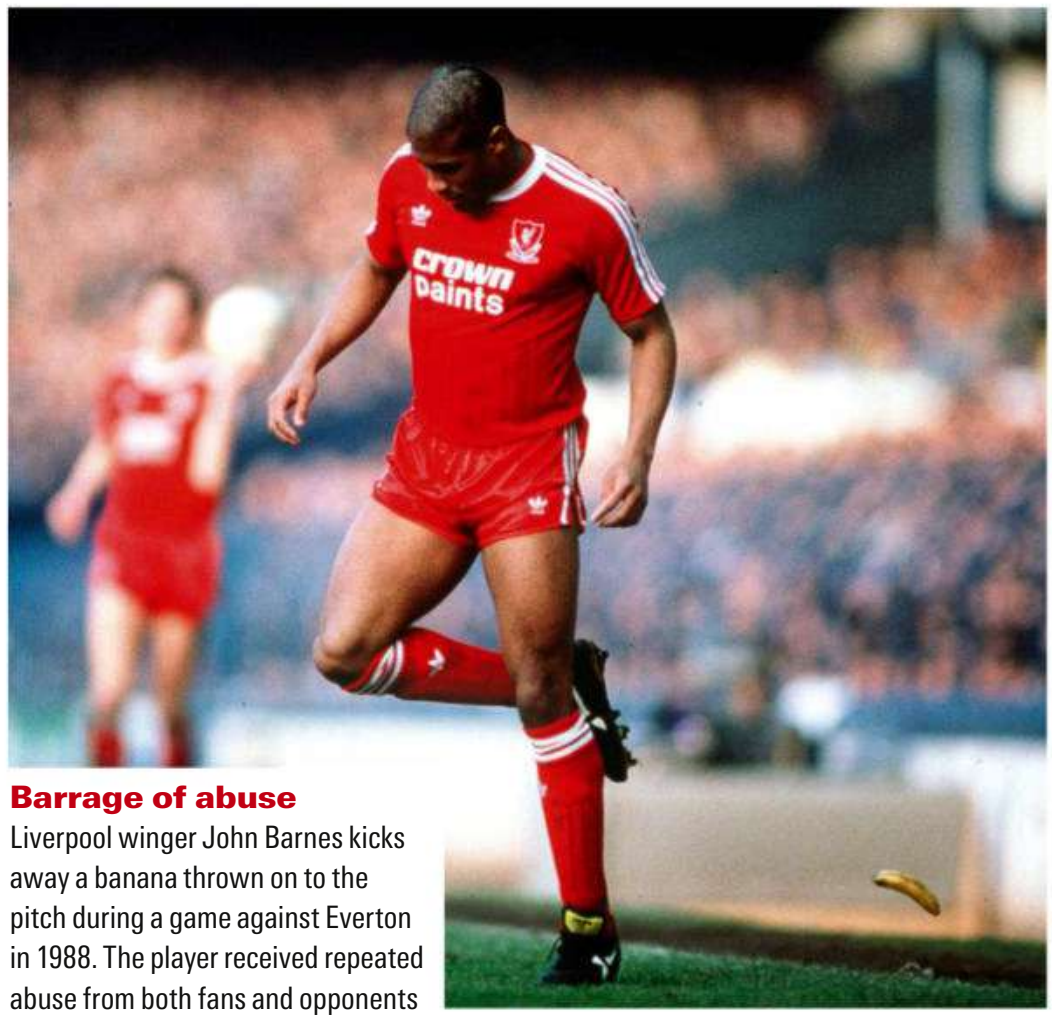
The response of the England players – who, in "taking the knee" before each match, had demonstrated a willingness to challenge such racism – was typically forceful. Rashford tweeted that he was sorry for missing the penalty but would "never apologise for who I am and where I came from". And, as Sancho pointed out, the abuse directed at him and his black teammates was "nothing new".

Racial prejudice towards black footballers can be traced back almost to the beginning of the modern game. Attitudes to non-white people in Britain, sportspeople included, derived from 19th-century racist and imperialist "scientific" thought, stressing the apparent natural physical abilities but "weak mental capabilities" of black people – ideas that had an impact on an array of sporting activities. In 1911, for instance, the Home Office prevented black American boxer Jack Johnson from defending his world heavyweight title in London against Britain's "Bombardier" Billy Wells. Some expressed concerns that the potential sight of a black man "pounding" a white opponent would be "unseemly", and feared that the bout would challenge notions of white superiority that might lead to increased racial unrest across the British empire. A formal colour bar prevented non-white people from competing in British boxing championships until after the Second World War.

With only a handful of non-white players, elite football required no such restrictions. However, evidence of racism



Unsporting behaviour World heavyweight champion Jack Johnson. In 1911, the Home Office blocked the American boxer from defending his title in Britain, with some deeming the bout "unseemly"



Barrage of abuse Liverpool winger John Barnes kicks away a banana thrown on to the pitch during a game against Everton in 1988. The player received repeated abuse from both fans and opponents

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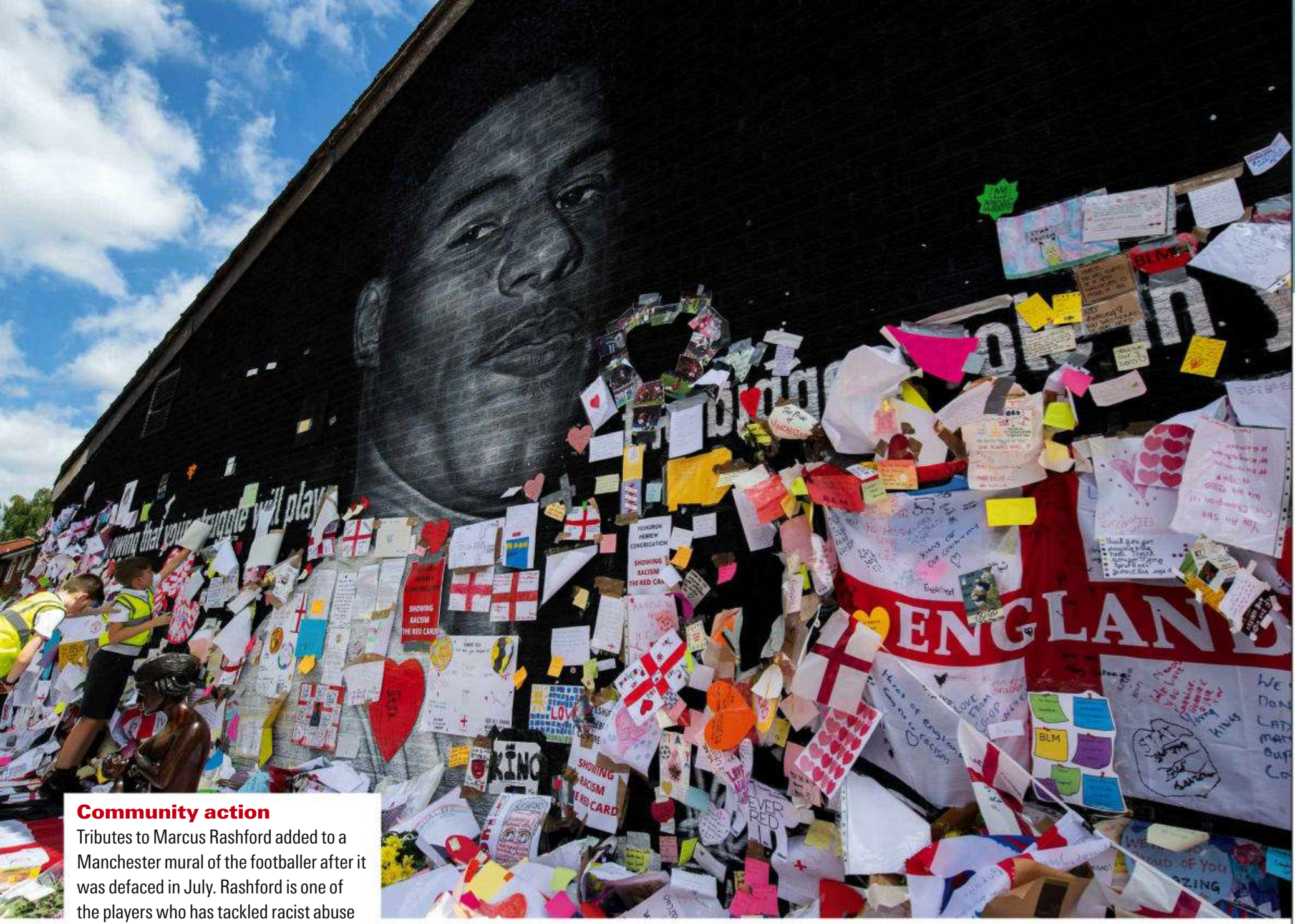

Community action
Tributes to Marcus Rashford added to a Manchester mural of the footballer after it was defaced in July. Rashford is one of the players who has tackled racist abuse

is not difficult to uncover. Walter Tull, son of a Barbadian father and white English mother, played professionally for Tottenham Hotspur and Northampton Town between 1908 and 1914. He was racially taunted during a match in Bristol in 1909; newspaper reports described the perpetrators as "a section of spectators [who] made a cowardly attack upon him in language lower than Billingsgate".

In other cases, racism was less overt. Historians have speculated that England's first black professional footballer, goalkeeper Arthur Wharton, may have been ignored by international selectors because of his ethnic background. In 1925, Plymouth's Jack Leslie was included and then withdrawn from an England squad – it's been suggested as a result of FA officials becoming aware that he was black.

A postwar boom

In the decades following the Second World War a smattering of black players turned out for English clubs, including Lindy Delapenha at Portsmouth and Middlesbrough, Roy Brown at Stoke City and Watford, South African-born Albert Johanneson at Leeds United, and John Charles at West Ham United. As the sons of postwar immigrants from the West Indies came of age from the 1970s onwards, the composition of Football League teams changed significantly. The number of black players rose from a total of just three in the 1972–73 season to 244 by 1993–94, and the proportion of clubs with black players in their squads increased from 2 per cent to 88 per cent. At international level, Viv Anderson and Kerry Davis became the first black footballers to be capped by the England men's and women's teams, in 1978 and 1982, respectively.

Racism in a variety of guises accompanied this emergence of black football talent. The presence of far-right political groups such as the National Front certainly made things worse at some clubs, but racial abuse was common on football terraces throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Paul Canoville recalled being subjected to vicious racist taunts from his own supporters during his debut appearance for Chelsea in 1982. And John Barnes, one of the most talented players of his generation, had bananas hurled at him by supporters, was regularly abused by opponents, and was particularly targeted for criticism by England fans.

The Football Offences Act of 1991 outlawed racist chanting but, as sociological studies have made clear, this neither prevented overt racism nor stopped black players receiving a disproportionate amount of (non-racist as well as racist) abuse from spectators. Other forms of racism were less explicit but no less significant. Black and Asian players have been subject to racial stereotyping throughout the game's history. A 1975 article in the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* praised the "natural aptitude" of black players, but questioned their temperament and physical and mental courage. "The cold and mud can destroy them," Leyton Orient manager George Petchey observed. "They are at their best at the beginning of the season when the pitches are grassy and the

"As sons of post-war immigrants from the West Indies came of age from the 1970s onwards, the composition of Football League teams changed significantly"

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Passion and politics
England footballer Bukayo Saka "takes the knee" before a match against the Czech Republic, June 2021. Such anti-racist gestures have sparked much debate

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sun is on their backs." Brendan Batson, one of West Bromwich Albion's pioneering black stars in the 1970s, recalled the prevalence of white assumptions about black players during his career: "No bottle, unreliable, don't like training, don't like the cold… All those ignorant views have got no foundation whatever."

The media has played a key role in reinforcing racial stereotypes. Studies conducted across several decades have identified continuities in the association of white players with intelligence, and black players with instinct and power. Recent research by Paul Ian Campbell and Louis Bebb, based on the analysis of British television commentaries from the 2018 World Cup, found that whereas black players were overwhelmingly praised for physical prowess and athleticism, white players were identified with cognitive and character attributes. This not only reinforced the long-standing idea of "natural" black athletes but also contributed to social myths about black people as "hyper-physical" and "cognitively challenged" that impact upon their wider treatment by society.

Social exclusion

Such attitudes have fed into institutional discrimination. Tony Collins became the first black manager in English professional football when he took over at Rochdale in 1960, but very few black players have followed him into coaching or management over the subsequent 60 years. Indeed, there have been only 10 black managers in the Premier League since its creation in 1992; even in 2014, when the proportion of professional players from black and minority ethnic backgrounds stood at 25 per cent, just 3 per cent of senior coaches came from those backgrounds. Much of this is explained by black players' continual exclusion from the social networks that provide access to such posts, as well as misconceptions about their ability to organise and lead multiracial teams.

It is not surprising that racism in football has increased in the past decade, in the context of social unrest and the divisive debates around national belonging that accompanied Brexit. While incidents still occur at grounds, there has also been a surge in online racism – to the extent that in April 2021 the game's leading bodies united in a four-day boycott of social media, in protest against "the ongoing and sustained discriminatory abuse" of footballers.

Few players are now prepared to stay quiet and accept racial abuse as a part of the game in the way that many did in the 20th century. Racism is being discussed and reported more than ever, and the game's 19th and early 20th-century black pioneers – from Scotland's Andrew Watson and Merseyside's Emma Clarke to Wharton, Leslie and Tull – are increasingly the subject of research and memorialisation. Yet the failure to tackle racism in its broadest sense, and to acknowledge the way in which football culture systematically normalises whiteness and marginalises "otherness", remain problems for those running the game in the 21st century just as much as they were in the 19th and 20th. H

"Tony Collins became the first black manager in English professional football in 1960, but very few black players followed him into management over the next 60 years"

Matthew Taylor is professor of history at the International Centre for Sports History and Culture, De Montfort University, and author of *Football: A Short History* (Shire, 2011)

WATCH The BBC Three programme **Shame in the Game: Racism in Football** is available to watch online at: *bbc.co.uk/programmes/p081mk0x*

MICHAEL WOOD ON...
THE TAMILS' GLITTERING CULTURAL UNIVERSE

"Let's cherish this shining light of the great Bronze Age civilisations"

I'm just about to hop on the train to Leicester, to visit friends in the Tamil community in what is Britain's most multicultural city. A feast for the mind and body – especially for a vegetarian! But we will also be celebrating the riches of south Indian culture and history with a generation of Leicester children born outside India. And though this may sound rather grand, it set me thinking about the history of civilisation.

The 20th century saw the end of most of the traditional civilisations of the ancient world. The Tamil poet and freedom fighter Subrahmania Bharati, who died 100 years ago this September, spoke of the "terrible onslaught of European Christianity and European materialism". We can see now that one of the effects of globalisation has been the final destruction of the thought-world of the civilisations that arose in the Bronze Age and which laid the foundations of our modern life, our philosophy, religious belief and custom.

Ancient Iraq and Egypt are, of course, long gone. China's "great tradition" began to be dismantled after 1911 and was comprehensively demolished by communism. The final blows to the archaic spiritual universe of Persian civilisation were dealt by those arch modernisers, the Shah and the mullahs.

But one of the world's classical civilisations came through to the new millennium. Although now changing fast, the Tamil cultural universe still survives, a little-known but brilliant flowering whose roots go back to prehistory.

It was a late developer. Recent digs date the urban centre of Adichanallur (at the southern tip of the Indian mainland) to about 1000 BC, and it thrived in the Roman period. Kamil Zvelebil, the great Czech scholar of Indian culture, called it the "last classical civilisation". The ancient Tamil poetry of the *Eight Anthologies*, he said, was "so wonderful and fresh, that the only true comparison is with ancient Greek lyric poetry". Meanwhile, the *Kural* is one of the great books of the world: its ethos of love, forgiveness and peace still informs the culture.

Among the ancient epics, perhaps the masterpiece is *Silappadikaram*, set in south India in the late Roman period, though lost in the mainstream until its rediscovery. Then there is *Bhakti*, the devotional songs of the Alvars and Nayanmars, the wandering saints. This tradition goes back to around the fifth century AD – and still now, at festival time, you may be treated to a visit from the traditional singers, the oduvars.

Other aspects of the tradition include that of bronze sculpture, at its artistic height in the 10th century. And then there's one of the world's great architectural traditions: stupendous temples, great gate towers rearing above the emerald-green palm forests, which are still the focus of music, dance, painting and sculpture, and visited by millions during the big festivals.

To these we might add, too, the classical dance (*bharat natyam*) and Carnatic music. And finally we must not forget the deities: Murugan, Siva and the Goddess. The ancient gods are still alive and well!

Taken together, this is one of humanity's richest cultural traditions, a heritage as glittering as those of Iran, Japan or Sanskritic India. These various forms, Zvelebil wrote in 1956, "made the world richer and happier, and deserve to be more widely known as manifestations of the Tamil genius".

Yet how much of this history is widely known in the west today? The western canon is so dominant in the way we look at the history of culture. But in Leicester is a reminder – not just for a community but for the rest of Britain. The destruction wrought by modernity, colonialism and monotheism is so great that there are very few places in the world now where the old view of humanity – the one shared, for example, by the ancient Greeks – is still alive.

There are rainforests. But there are also rainforests of the spirit. And you can find them close at hand – even in Leicester! H

Michael Wood is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He has presented numerous BBC series, and his books include *The Story of China* (Simon & Schuster, 2020). His twitter handle is @mayavision

BBC

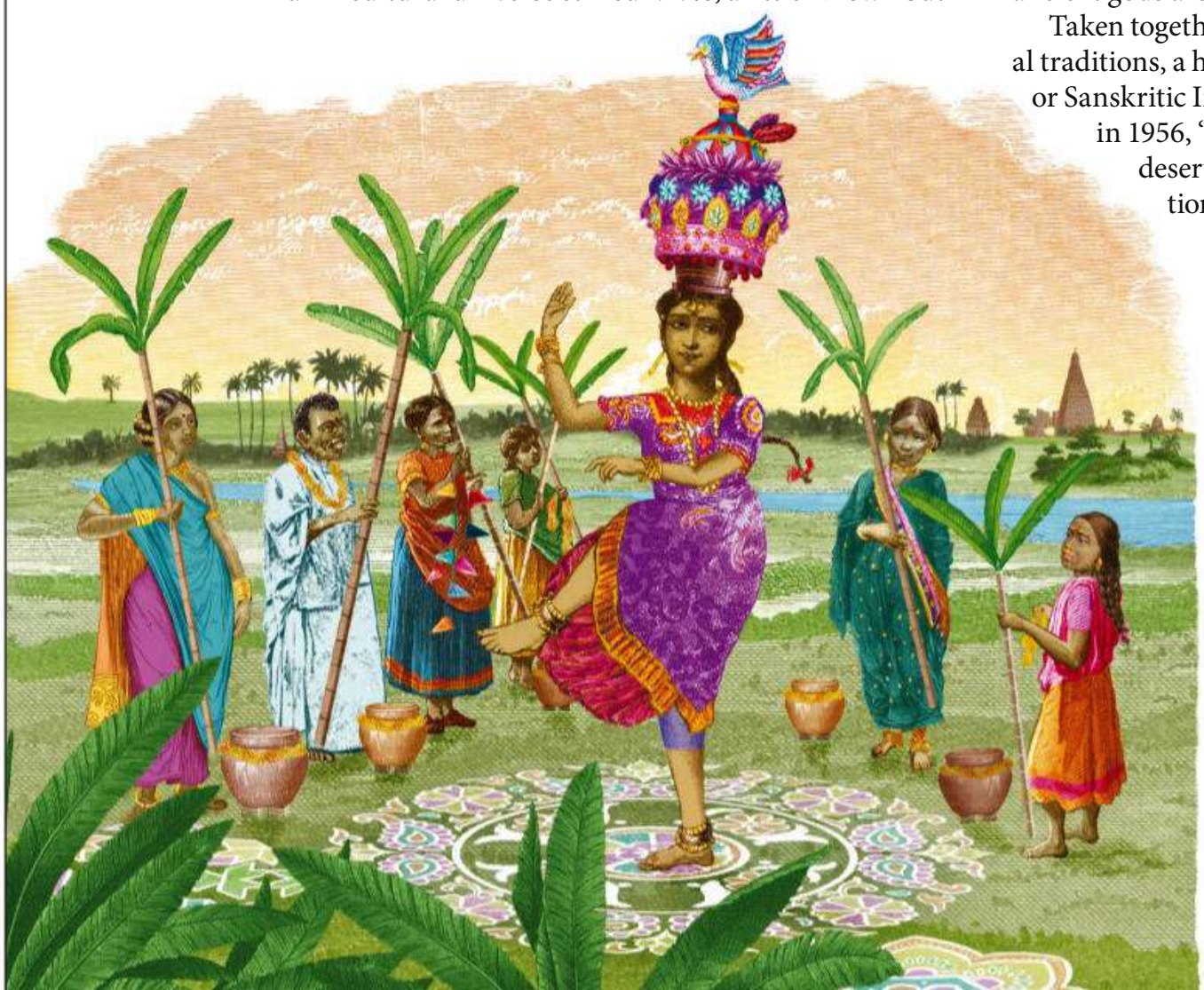


ILLUSTRATION BY **FEMKE DE JONG**

ANNIVERSARIES

DOMINIC SANDBROOK highlights events that took place in October in history

29 OCTOBER 1863

The Red Cross is founded

A new organisation aims to help wounded soldiers

Henry Dunant was a man on a mission. The Swiss businessman had come to northern Italy in the summer of 1859 keen to buttonhole the French emperor Napoleon III about water rights for his company in north Africa. When he arrived, though, Dunant found himself a witness to the carnage of the battle of Solferino – a bloody clash that pitted France and Sardinia against their mutual enemy Austria. Almost 30,000 men were killed or wounded, and the horror stayed with Dunant forever.

For the next four years he travelled around Europe, describing what he'd seen and arguing that wounded soldiers deserved better care. The ideal thing, Dunant said, would be some kind of neutral organisation looking after soldiers on all sides, and recognised by all European combatants. The Geneva Society for Public Welfare took a keen interest, and by the summer of 1863 the idea had picked up considerable momentum.

So it was that on 26 October 1863, delegates from the UK, Austria, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Prussia, Russia, Spain and Sweden, as well as some smaller states and other interested organisations, joined Dunant and his colleagues in Geneva to discuss the plan. Three days later they agreed a set of resolutions, calling for international relief efforts for wounded soldiers, the creation of volunteer units to look after casualties on the battlefield, and a series of conferences to enshrine new rules in international law.

They also agreed that medical personnel should wear as their emblem an inverse of the flag of Switzerland – a white armband with a bold red cross. Thus the new organisation gained its name: the Red Cross.

A Red Cross armband worn by Arthur Conan Doyle during the Boer War

The army of Alexander the Great overwhelms Persian forces at the battle of Gaugamela, depicted in a 17th-century painting. This calamitous defeat signalled the end of the reign of Darius III, "king of kings" of Persia

AKG-IMAGES/ALAMY

A sign commemorates the 1903 baseball clash celebrated as the first World Series

13 OCTOBER 1903

At the end of an epic eight-game baseball battle, the Boston Americans (later Red Sox) mount an extraordinary comeback to defeat the Pittsburgh Pirates. Though technically only an informal clash, it is remembered as **the first ever World Series**.

1 OCTOBER 331 BC

Alexander the Great slaughters Persian troops

Macedonian blades slash Darius III's soldiers to shreds

As the sun rose over Gaugamela, in what is now northern Iraq, the clinking of harnesses and barking of orders drifted across the plain. The troops of Persian "king of kings" Darius III were making their final preparations for battle.

Among the smaller Macedonian force on the other side of the plain, the friends of Alexander the Great stood uncertainly. They had ventured deep into Persian territory, bent on conquest. But now, as dawn broke, there came no sound nor hint of movement from their king's tent. His captains looked at each other in disbelief. On this day, of all days, how could he have overslept?

At last, pushing past the bodyguards into the tent, his veteran deputy Parmenion shook Alexander awake. As the king's eyes blinked open, Parmenion stared at him in amazement. In response, Alexander just smiled. By concentrating his forces, he said, Darius had saved him a lot of trouble, and "now in one day the decision would be reached".

Dust swirled across the plain. After the long summer, the ground was hot and hard. As Alexander raised his sword and rallied his men to charge, the midday sun pounded down. But above, said the ancient sources, there circled an eagle – an omen of victory.

Thanks to the dust, nobody was ever quite sure what happened next. The result was clear, though: a crushing Macedonian victory, with tens of thousands of Persians slaughtered in the chaos. Some sources credited Alexander's daring battle tactics, charging first right then switching to attack the Persian centre at the last minute. Others said it was not Alexander who had won the battle but the Persians who had thrown it away, losing their nerve and betraying their king.

For Darius, it hardly mattered. All that did matter was the outcome – a disaster beyond forgiveness or recovery. As he fled the field, Darius surely knew his reign was over.

Maxentius (right) took power in AD 306 ahead of Constantine and others. But, after defeat six years later, he drowned in the river Tiber

28 OCTOBER 312

Fleeing after defeat by his rival Constantine at the battle of Milvian Bridge, the Roman emperor **Maxentius falls into the river Tiber** and drowns. His body is then fished out of the river and ceremonially beheaded.

The body of executed nurse Edith Cavell, who had been buried in Brussels, is carried back to England in 1919 after the end of the conflict

ALAMY

7 OCTOBER 1915

A British nurse is tried for treason in occupied Brussels

Edith Cavell calmly admits to sheltering Allied soldiers

Brussels in the autumn of 1915 was a city under occupation by the German army. In the gilded Senate chamber, decorated with scenes from Belgian history, the chairs were full of German officers, leaning intently forward.

They had not come for an ordinary meeting. Rather, they were here to witness the trial of 35 prisoners, many of them charged with espionage and treason. The first of the accused, a 49-year-old Englishwoman, stepped forward to testify. Her name was Edith Cavell.

The daughter of a Norfolk country vicar, and a woman of deep seriousness and intense religious faith, Cavell had been working as a senior nurse in Brussels when war broke out in 1914. Although she was supposed to be strictly neutral she had joined a secret resistance network run by two Belgian aristocrats. She sheltered dozens of British, French and Belgian soldiers, keeping them hidden until they were ready to leave for the Dutch border. It was, she thought, her patriotic duty.

When the Germans unravelled the network in the summer of 1915, Cavell saw no point in lying. Her parents had brought her up as a good Christian girl who would always tell the truth. And now, on 7 October, facing conviction for treason, with the German officers observing proceedings closely, she made no effort to hide the truth. "She spoke without trembling," reported one observer, "and showed a clear mind."

Twenty-four hours later, the court announced her sentence: death. Then, on 12 October, to the horror of much of the world, Edith Cavell took her place before a German firing squad – and passed into legend.

A commemorative portrait of Edith Cavell, the English nurse executed for sheltering Allied soldiers during the initial year of the First World War

A 13th-century illustration of King John, who lost his jewels and regalia in the Wash before perishing

18/19 OCTOBER 1216

King John dies of dysentery

The detested monarch succumbs to sickness after gruelling weeks on the road

In the second half of 1216, things were not going swimmingly for England's King John. After 17 years of a reign characterised by sadism, dishonesty and a truly remarkable devotion to raising taxes, he had recently led an army north, determined to exact revenge on the barons who had forced him to agree to Magna Carta. The barons promptly announced their support for his rival, Prince Louis of France, who was greeted in London as a conquering hero.

For John, worse followed. On around 11 October, his baggage train became bogged down in the Wash – the swampy, sandy estuary where Norfolk meets Lincolnshire – and he lost his jewels and regalia. By the time he reached Newark Castle a few days later, he was also suffering from agonising dysentery.

Later there were rumours that John had gorged himself on unripe peaches, overdone the sweet ale or even been slipped poison from a toad. But there was no need to create a lurid explanation. He had been on the road for weeks, rain-soaked and exhausted – and in the Middle Ages, dysentery was a killer.

Sometime in the night of 18 /19 October 1216, John breathed his last, aged 49. He was succeeded by his son Henry, then just nine years old, who faced his fair share of unrest in the decades that followed. Henry, though, was generally seen as a decent fellow. Nobody ever said that of John. As the near-contemporary chronicler Matthew Paris famously put it: "Foul as it is, Hell itself is made fouler by the presence of John." H

Dominic Sandbrook's new series of history books for children, *Adventures in Time* (Particular Books), is available now

ALAMY/SHUTTERSTOCK

WHY WE SHOULD REMEMBER. . .

The day **Walt Disney World Resort** in Florida welcomed its first guests

BY **JOHN WILLS**

Fifty years ago, on 1 October 1971, Walt Disney World Resort in Florida admitted its first visitors. On that opening day, around 10,000 people paid the $3.50 admission fee, purchased a $4.25 coupon book valid for seven rides, and dined on hot dogs at 45 cents each. "We need a place like this because of the world situation," one Floridian motel owner explained, "a place where we can come and relax and forget about all the bad things." And a parent from Tampa Bay confided: "Let's face it, I'm going to be back here whether I like it or not – the kids will see to that." Three weeks later, Roy Disney formally dedicated the resort to his late brother Walt, announcing his hopes: "May Walt Disney World bring joy and inspiration and new knowledge to all who come to this happy place."

Plans for Walt Disney World dated back to the 1950s. The success of Disneyland Resort in California, which opened in July 1955, fuelled ideas for a scaled-up development on the east coast. Dubbed the "Florida Project", designs for a new entertainment complex in the Sunshine State were initially built around Walt's idea for an "Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow" (EPCOT) similar to the "white city" designs of World Expositions. (Indeed, Disney provided exhibits for the 1964 New York World's Fair.)

"Walt Disney World is arguably the most visited place on Earth – a 20th-century eighth wonder of the world"

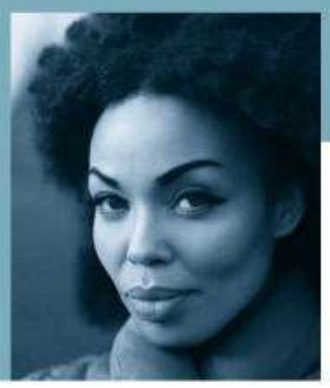
In 1963, Disney viewed potential sites, settling on an area of swamp between Orlando and Kissimmee. To avoid unwelcome media attention and land speculation, Disney used fake investment companies to buy vast tracts of land at competitive prices. Following Walt's death in 1966, his brother Roy oversaw the construction of the resort, prioritising the Magic Kingdom, a version of Disneyland.

Following that 1971 opening, the corporation added EPCOT in 1982, Disney-MGM Studios (now Disney's Hollywood Studios) in 1989, and Disney's Animal Kingdom in 1998. Now boasting more than 200 merchandise stores, 36,000 hotel rooms, a security force, a fire department and a power plant, Walt Disney World is more akin to a city than a theme park. With the Magic Kingdom alone attracting 20 million visitors each year, Walt Disney World Resort is arguably the most visited place on Earth – a 20th-century eighth wonder of the world with $100 ticket prices.

Goldilocks and the three bears at Walt Disney World Resort, 1971. Although it opened with only the Magic Kingdom, the site now boasts EPCOT and Disney's Animal Kingdom, among other attractions

The continued success of Walt Disney World, and the Disney brand more broadly, testifies to our mass fascination with fantasy and play. Disney champions the child within us all, a toy in one hand – and several dollar bills in the other. H

John Wills is a US historian at the University of Kent, and author of *Disney Culture* (Rutgers University Press, 2017)



HIDDEN HISTORIES

EMMA DABIRI explores lesser-known stories from our past

"Merriman-Labor's searing satire of the British was not well received"

In 1904, an accomplished young Krio man from a middle-class family in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, set sail from the west African coast to London.

Aged just 26, his aim was to make his mark on the literary world. Augustus Merriman-Labor had every reason to be optimistic. He was hard-working, gifted and successful, with a rising profile in his home country, and moving to London to take advantage of the opportunities the city afforded was a logical but brave next step. As scholar Danell Jones writes: "The *Sierra Leone Weekly News* had assured him that his colour would be no obstacle there," and he could "go anywhere, wherever his merits… will take him".

The Krios have a fascinating history. In 1787, the Sierra Leone Resettlement saw 411 people "repatriated" to an area of land on the west African coast. Most were members of the black poor community in London; many were formerly enslaved people freed after fighting for the British in the American Revolutionary War, but who had ended up destitute. Attitudes towards black people shut down almost all opportunity and employment.

Abolitionist Carl Bernhard Wadström felt that "it was necessary they should be sent somewhere, and be no longer suffered to infest the streets of London". The Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor devised a novel solution: to persuade them to return to the continent of their ancestors, where many were accompanied by their white English wives and their children.

After a first settlement was burned down in 1789 due to rising tensions between the new settlers and native people, its successor became known as Freetown. From 1792 to 1800 it was settled by Nova Scotian Settlers – freed slaves, black pioneers and Jamaican Maroons. The population was further expanded by "liberated Africans": people who continued to be captured and sold after slavery was prohibited in 1807 but who were intercepted by the British navy and "repatriated" to Sierra Leone. These diverse groups would create what would become the Krios. In 1808, when British interests had shifted from slavery to colonialism, Sierra Leone became a crown colony. It wouldn't achieve independence from Britain until 1961.

Freetown in Augustus's day had a bustling literary community which helped shape his dreams. With a play, lectures and a novella to his name, it was an 1898 essay portraying the colonial administration as arrogant and ignorant that made his reputation in his home nation.

Nonetheless, as was the case with many instructed under the dictates of a colonial education, Merriman-Labor believed in the myth of the "mother country": a maternal vision of Britain carefully crafted to convince colonial subjects that this little island was the seat of civilisation, a benevolent authority figure charged with their upkeep and protection. To travel there thus represented something of a symbolic and literal homecoming.

The distance between the image of England sold in the colonies and the reality of life there, not least for an African colonial subject, would become the inspiration for much of Merriman-Labor's later writing. While most is out of print and much of it lost, his 1909 *Britons Through Negro Spectacles* was republished in 2018. It was decades, if not centuries ahead of its time: as Danell Jones puts it, it is "a blend of travelogue, reverse-ethnology and spoof of books by ill-informed 'Africa experts'" that sees the narrator spend a day escorting a newly arrived African around Edwardian London.

Merriman-Labor's searing satire was not well received. The audacity of a young African man subverting the colonial order of African inferiority by taking on the role of ethnographic observer of white Europeans, and poking fun of the British while he did so, could not be tolerated. The book was met with condemnation, and its commercial failure resulted in his bankruptcy. Following overwork at a munitions factory, he died in the Lambeth workhouse infirmary in 1919. He was 42.

Augustus was a remarkable man. He was punished dearly for challenging Edwardian attitudes to race, but as Jones writes: "In a world dominated by European empires, at a time when black people were considered inferior to white, an African man claimed his right to describe the world as he found it… Merriman-Labor looked at the greatest city in the greatest empire the world had even known and laughed." H

Augustus Merriman-Labor in Freetown, Sierra Leone, c1904. That year he moved to London to try to improve his literary career, but was met with disappointment

Emma Dabiri is an author and broadcaster, and teaching fellow at SOAS University of London. Her latest book is *What White People Can Do Next: From Allyship to Coalition* (Penguin, 2021)

The pioneering path of immunotherapy

Immunotherapy, a treatment that uses our immune system to fight cancer, is a particularly promising tool in the quest of treating cancer. But it's not a modern invention: it was first developed in 1891, by a surgeon and cancer researcher called William Coley. After reading about a patient whose sarcoma cancer regressed after he developed a serious skin infection, Coley hypothesised that certain bacteria could cause some cancerous tumours to shrink.

He injected his patients with a concoction of killed bacteria called "Coley's toxins", a technique that other doctors at the time adopted themselves, often with fantastic results. However, in some early instances, when Coley used live bacteria, patient outcomes worsened still.

Since then, immunotherapy has made huge progress. Cancer Research UK's funded scientists are harnessing the power of the body's immune system to tackle cancer, from understanding how the immune system seeks out and destroys cancer cells, to developing new treatments.

But a big challenge has been that only a subset of people respond to immunotherapy – something that scientists have been keen to understand. Researchers need to find ways to ensure that immunotherapy can be effective for everyone, and Cancer Research UK has been hard at work making this a reality.

Gifts in Wills fund a third of Cancer Research UK's research, and they are vital to accelerating progress so the charity can save more lives. 1 in 2 people in the UK born after 1960 will get cancer in their lifetime.* In the last 40 years our research has helped double cancer survival in the UK.

Making strides in science

Dr Sean Lim, a Cancer Research UK-funded research scientist specialising in lymphoma research, is working with rituximab, an immunotherapy drug that hunts down cancerous lymphoma cells and sticks to their surface, marking them for destruction by the immune system. But over time, the lymphoma cells learn how to remove rituximab from their surface, meaning the drug stops working.

Dr Lim has discovered that a combination of rituximab and another drug – varlilumab – might counteract this resistance and could hugely improve survival for people with this disease.

Just as Cancer Research UK's researchers like Dr Lim pledge to do all they can to prevent, diagnose and treat cancer, the charity is asking their supporters to pledge to leave a gift in their Will to Cancer Research UK, so they can help beat cancer for future generations.

Gifts in Wills Guide

Requesting a free Gifts in Wills Guide is the perfect starting point for pledging a gift in your Will to Cancer Research UK. It includes tips and information on how to write or update your Will, our Free Will Service, the different types of gift you can pledge and the impact of your gift.

*Ahmad AS et al. *British Journal of Cancer*, 2015

To find out more, request a free Gifts in Wills Guide. Visit cruk.org/pledge or call 0800 077 6644

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464), Scotland (SC041666), the Isle of Man (1103) and Jersey (247).

CANCER RESEARCH UK

Together we will beat cancer

LETTERS

William Cuffay, whose story reader Stephen Drage found inspirational

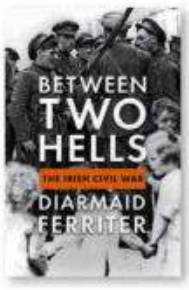
LETTER OF THE MONTH

Style revolution

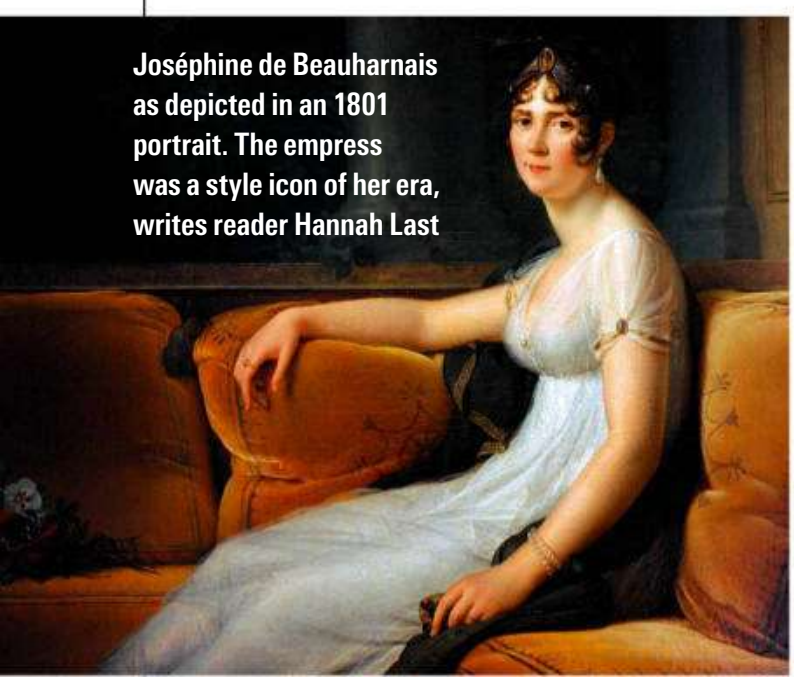
I loved your feature about the legacy the French Revolution had in Britain (*Shockwaves of Revolution*, August). I have a degree in fashion journalism, so particularly enjoyed reading about how clothes inspired by the silhouettes worn by the ancient Greeks and Romans made a comeback after the revolution.

However, it's worth pointing out that this shape of dress is commonly known as the "empire line", in homage to Napoleon Bonaparte's first wife, Joséphine de Beauharnais. She popularised this style of straight, neoclassical dress in Paris, and it was named after France's First Empire, formed shortly after the revolution of 1789. Joséphine would usually wear white empire line dresses – again linking to the ancient Greeks, but also because Napoleon liked to see his wife in that colour. The trend caught on, spreading across Europe and into the wardrobes of women keen to copy the latest Parisian trends.

Joséphine would spend thousands on her clothes, similar to former queen Marie Antoinette, so didn't learn much from history!
Hannah Last, Harrow



We reward the *Letter of the Month* writer with a copy of a new history book. This issue, that is **Between Two Hells: The Irish Civil War** by Diarmaid Ferriter. You can read our review of the book on page 80



Joséphine de Beauharnais as depicted in an 1801 portrait. The empress was a style icon of her era, writes reader Hannah Last

Tudors on TV

I have just read Anna Whitelock's column on the constant remake of programmes about Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn (*Talking Points*, September). Tudor history is my favourite era to read about and watch. I agree that when it comes to this time period, TV is dominated by Elizabeth I and Henry VIII, but I would love to see a decent period drama about Mary I, as I think she is often forgotten about or overlooked.

I have also recently been reading Jean Plaidy's novels on Isabella and Ferdinand II of Aragon, which have piqued my interest to learn more about Spanish history. I would love to see a period drama that shows the story of Isabella and Ferdinand creating a united Spain, the horrors of the Inquisition, and the heartache of losing their children.
Hannah Barnett, Hull

A troubling legacy

I was deeply moved by Emma Dabiri's piece on [19th-century social reformer] William Cuffay (*Hidden Histories*, August). I had never previously heard of Cuffay, but was touched by the account of how he sought to improve the lot of the working classes – in spite of the fact that many of them might have shared the deeply ingrained racism [he was the son of a formerly enslaved ship's cook] of the capitalists, aristocrats and middle classes he was struggling against.

I found his example inspirational, and it set me to wondering who else I might not have heard of due to the constant "whitewashing" of history. I have no doubt that Cuffay's example barely scratches the surface of the unheard experiences and contributions throughout history of people of colour.

I have often encountered the caveat that such discrimination has to be seen in the context of the times. Although context is always important, it is difficult to separate the past from the present; it seems clear to me that the institutional and structural inequalities of the Atlantic slave trade, and empire more broadly, continue to have real-world, real-time consequences today.

This feels especially topical now in the light of the deplorable racist treatment of some of England's black footballers after the loss at Wembley to Italy. I am dismayed that we still need to have this conversation in 2021– but it is all the more reason why I have ordered Emma Dabiri's book, *What White People Can Do Next*, in the hope that I can somehow learn to be a better ally against racism and discrimination.
Stephen Drage, Devizes

The cruelty of Cromwell

Ronald Hutton exposed Oliver Cromwell as a hypocritical tyrant (*The Dark Truth About Oliver Cromwell*, July). Cromwell made no attempt, however, to cultivate a pompous image of himself on his nine-month visit to Ireland in 1649. His intention was unequivocal: he went to kill Catholics. He admitted to having a pathological hatred of "savage, barbaric and subhuman" Irish Catholics, and he and his army proceeded to slaughter thousands at Drogheda – believed to be the worst massacre to have taken place on Irish soil – Wexford, and elsewhere. On his return to England he boasted of his "great work against the barbarous and bloodthirsty Irish".

The exhibition of the English Civil War Society at Warwick Castle details 618,000 deaths in Ireland from 1642 to 1651, out of a population of one and a half million – about 41 per cent. It's believed to represent one of the greatest tragedies of any people for any period of European history, including the Second World War.
Jim Reddy, Northenden

Illuminating contributions

Almost all readers who write in comment on your contributors' erudite articles, but I wish to sing the praises of your wonderful illustrator, Femke de Jong. I love not just the quality of the drawings, but the way she so carefully illustrates the subject matter. Michael Wood's articles are always thought-provoking, but Femke makes these ideas come to life through her beautiful illustrations. I look forward to the next one.
Richard Parry, London

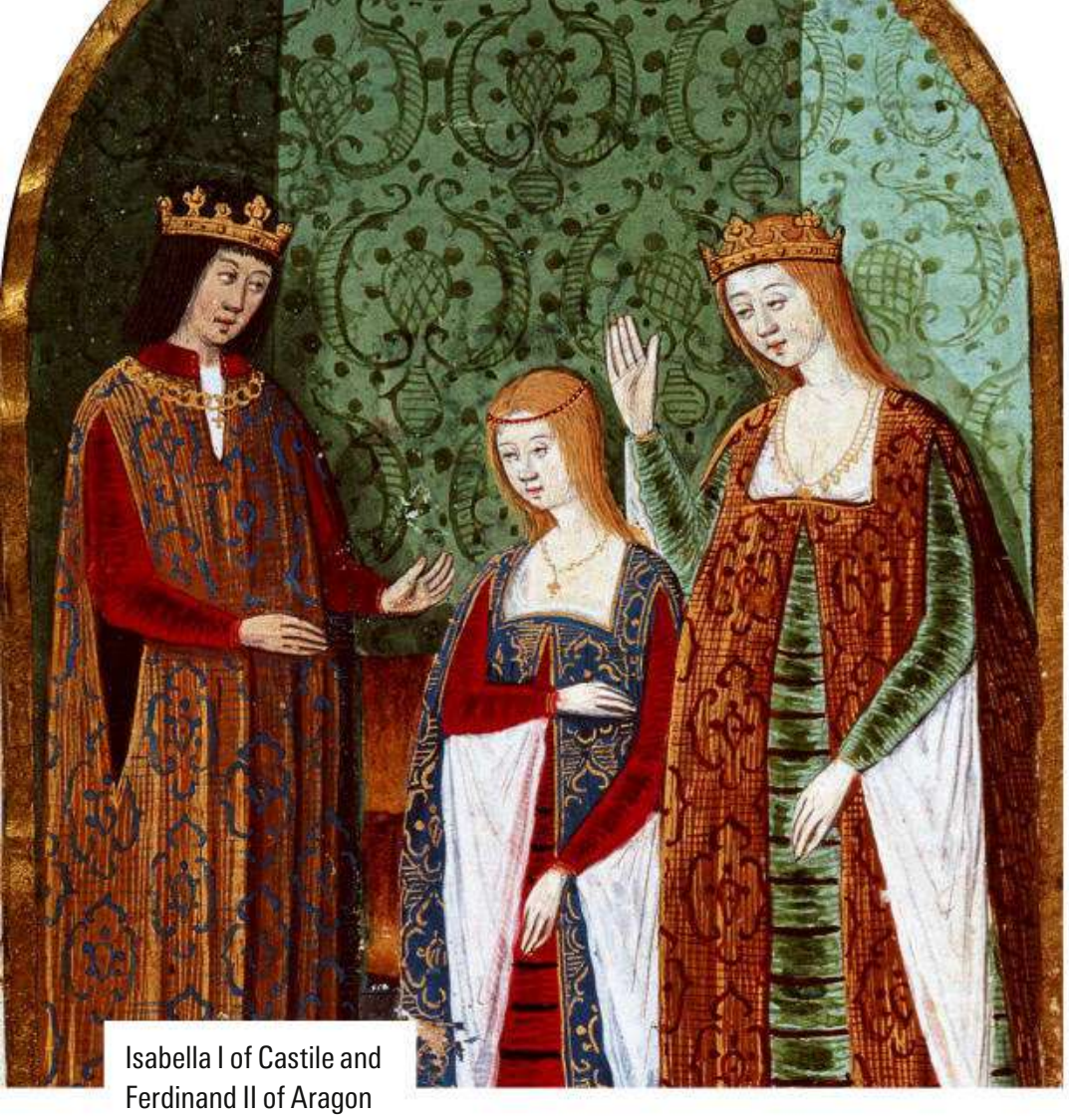
Poverty and prejudice

I was very interested in the feature on workhouses (September), especially the final paragraph about the shame and stigma associated with entering a workhouse.

This shame cast a very long shadow. As a teenager in the 1960s, I can remember my

ALAMY/NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Queen's Park Institution in Blackburn in 1931. Janice R Barker recalls its local stigma as a former workhouse



Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon in a c1482 depiction. Reader Hannah Barnett suggests their story would form the basis of a gripping period drama

mother telling me that many old people were most reluctant to go for treatment at Queen's Park Hospital, in Blackburn. The reason? The building had formerly been the workhouse. **Janice R Barker,** Blackburn

Sporting heroes

Donald Bell may have been the only *professional* footballer awarded the Victoria Cross in the First World War (*Q&A*, August), but Major Bernard William Vann, originally from the 8th Battalion, Sherwood Foresters Regiment, was awarded the medal for his actions on 29 September 1918 at Bellenglise and Lehaucourt, France while commanding the 1/6th Battalion.

Vann had joined Derby County and made his debut on 23 March 1907. His career there was short-lived, and he made just two more appearances without scoring. A short spell at Leicester Fosse also followe5d.

He was killed in action, shot by a sniper, at Ramicourt, France, on 3 October 1918. **Graham E Conway,** Lincolnshire

The masked zinger

I found *UnMasked* (September), on the man in the iron mask, very interesting. Perhaps an updated version is appropriate for these troubled times: The Man in the Ironed Mask! **Maria Sproulle,** Orwell

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▸ Page 60

Nothing new under the sun
FROM LEFT: **Attila the Hun meets Pope Leon I; a farmer walks across frozen ground; a medieval windmill; a man afflicted with plague in the 14th century; goods transported along the Silk Roads. Many of the issues confronting us in the 21st century would also have been familiar to Europeans in the Middle Ages**

From devastating climate change to deadly pandemics, the challenges that kept our medieval ancestors awake at night weren't so different from those preoccupying us today, says **Dan Jones**

The (surprisingly) modern

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Middle Ages

In the middle of the 16th century, the historian John Foxe looked back at the great sweep of time since the birth of Christ, and decided that it could be sliced into three chunks.

History, he suggested, began with the "primitive time", when Christians were persecuted and had to hide in catacombs from wicked Romans. More recently came the "latter days", Foxe's own times – the age of the Reformation. Sandwiched between these two was an era of about 1,000 years, which were neither fish nor fowl. Foxe called these centuries "the middle age". Today we call them the Middle Ages, or the medieval period.

That vast slab of history stretched from the fall of the western Roman empire in the fifth century AD to the European voyages to the New World in the 16th. It has a bit of an odd reputation: the Middle Ages are often the butt of a big historical joke. In the popular imagination, that era is a time when the classical world had vanished but the modern world had yet to get going; when people (supposedly) believed that the world was flat and that water was poisonous; when God was in charge of everything; and when everyone was either a knight, a priest or a peasant.

Politicians and newspaper journalists often use the word "medieval" to characterise something that is bad, backward, stupid, cruel, violent or hopelessly outdated. This can get historians quite worked up; some have even tried to jettison the term "Middle Ages", instead preferring to refer to the "Middle Millennium". Needless to say, this hasn't caught on – yet.

But if we look a little more closely at the medieval world, there is plenty to see that we may recognise in our own times. Because although there *are* profound differences between life today and life in the Middle Ages, there is also much that connects us.

Our modern world is built on medieval foundations, and many of the anxieties and issues that concern us today were shared, in only slightly altered form, by medieval people. As the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes says – and as the five examples explored over the page show – "There is nothing new under the sun".

Cold comfort
A farmer and his pack animal walk in the ice and snow, as depicted in a 14th-century health handbook. The Little Ice Age fuelled problems including famines, disease and political instability

Hell and high water

Medieval climate change sparked crises ranging from plague to population collapse

From the late summer of 1314, a hard rain began to fall across north-west Europe. It pelted down. Temperatures plummeted. Rivers burst their banks and fields flooded. For months, the weather was abysmal – not only through the winter but into the next spring, summer and beyond. In the following years, harvest after harvest failed. People starved in their hundreds of thousands. Animals died of hunger and widespread disease. "A great famine appeared," wrote one chronicler. "Such a scarcity has not been seen in our time… nor heard of for a hundred years."

Hard times were not unknown in the medieval world, where life for most people was precarious and tied to the skies, but the start of the 14th century was different. This was not just an unlucky streak of bad weather but the start of a major shift in the climate, since dubbed the Little Ice Age, which lasted several hundred years, radically affecting everyday life. A sharp fall in temperatures, felt acutely across western Europe and beyond, brought much harsher winters and tougher farming conditions. Extending from the 14th to the 19th century, the Little Ice Age witnessed population collapse, economic stagnation, widespread political instability and some of the worst human and animal plagues in recorded history. Not all of these were directly caused by the change in Europe's climate – but neither were they entirely coincidental.

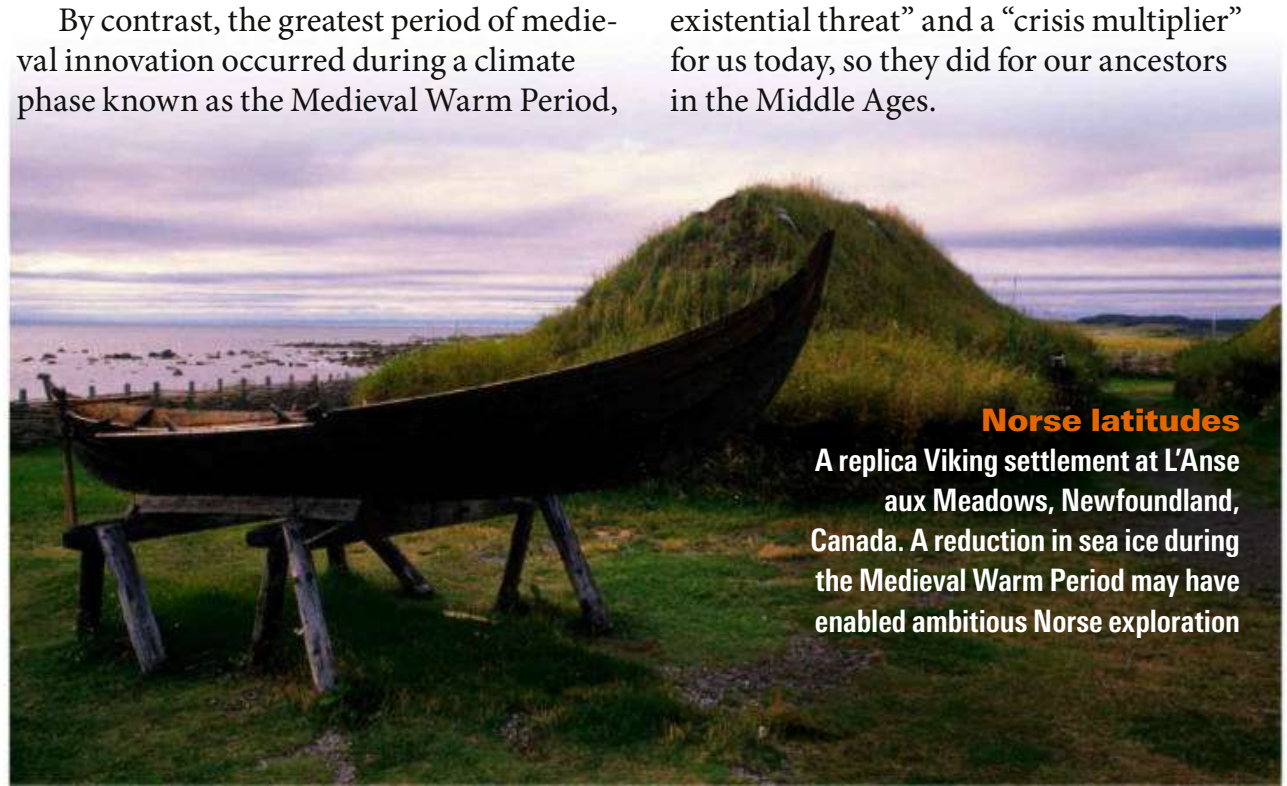
Nor was this unique. The Middle Ages were bookended by climate change. The era began with cooling at the end of the so-called Roman Warm Period (when several centuries of consistently warm, wet weather had allowed the Roman empire to flourish). Once these conditions worsened, Rome's emperors found it harder to cope with rebellions and invasions. Rome's collapse ushered in the Middle Ages.

By contrast, the greatest period of medieval innovation occurred during a climate phase known as the Medieval Warm Period, which began about AD 950 and ended around 1250. During this spell, the power, wealth and regional influence of European kingdoms grew, fuelled by a surge in farming yields, population growth and exploration. It was probably no coincidence that it was around this time that Vikings struck out far and wide from Scandinavia, navigating northern seas – temporarily much less icy than they had been – to reach Iceland, Greenland and even North America.

It is often said that the most pressing global concern in the 21st century is climate change. Some scientists argue that we are living through an epoch – the Anthropocene – in which human-induced climate change is altering the very fabric of the Earth.

Just as shifting global temperatures constitute (in the words of the UN) "an existential threat" and a "crisis multiplier" for us today, so they did for our ancestors in the Middle Ages.

In the medieval world, life for most people was precarious and tied to the skies



Norse latitudes
A replica Viking settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland, Canada. A reduction in sea ice during the Medieval Warm Period may have enabled ambitious Norse exploration

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

Foreign bodies

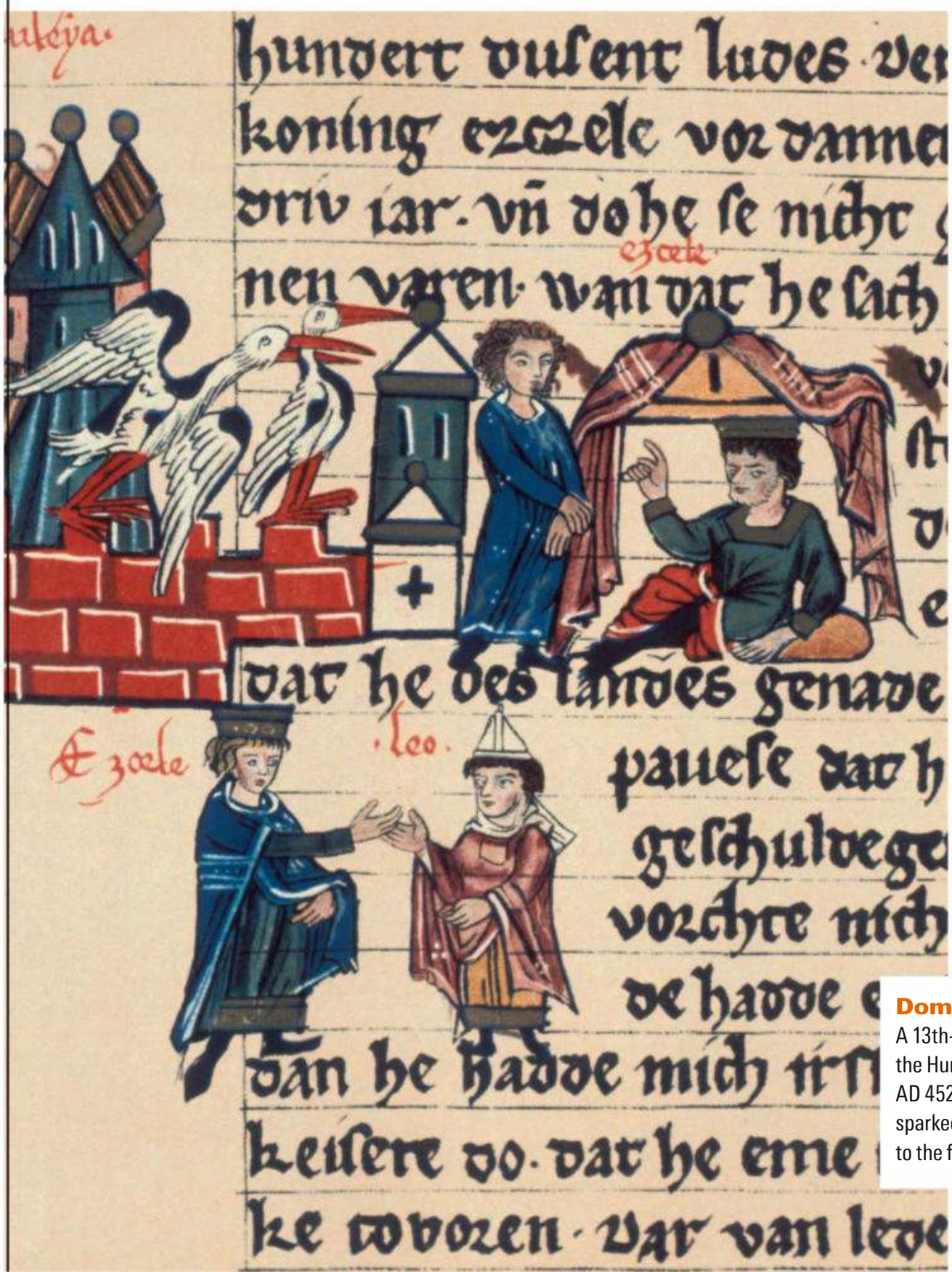
Reign in Spain
An 11th-century coin from Seville. Medieval Islamic forces conquered most of the Iberian peninsula

In an era of mass migration, native populations feared for their livelihoods

A group of English craftspeople delivered a petition to King Edward IV in c1463, complaining about foreigners taking their jobs. There were too many "aliens" in the country, moaned the petitioners, and their presence meant that "the king's subjects [are] greatly impoverished and not at work".

This was a familiar lament in medieval England. Throughout the Middle Ages, there always seemed to be bands of outsiders arriving. After the departure of the Romans from Britain in the fifth century AD, waves of Germanic and Scandinavian peoples appeared: Angles, Saxons and Jutes were followed somewhat later by Vikings and then Normans. By the 14th and 15th centuries, invasion-led immigration had given way to what we'd now call "economic migration" as foreign workers, often highly skilled, came to English cities to ply their trades.

In a broad sense, migration was good for England: it boosted the economy, expanded the gene pool and enriched the culture. But it also made people uncomfortable, unsettled and (sometimes) violently angry.



Domino effect
A 13th-century manuscript shows Attila the Hun meeting Pope Leon I at Aquileja in AD 452. The Huns' westward migration sparked a chain reaction that contributed to the fall of the Roman empire

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Attacks on "foreigners" were common during times of political unease – most notoriously in 1381 when dozens of Flemish workers in London were hunted down and murdered by roving gangs of rebels during the Peasants' Revolt.

So migration, with all its benefits and its problems, was an important historical force in the Middle Ages, just as it is in our own time. Indeed, some of the most famous episodes in medieval history can be seen as stories about migration.

The fall of the western Roman empire in the fifth century, considered to mark the beginning of the Middle Ages, was sparked by a global migration crisis. It began in eastern Europe where bands of nomadic Huns, fleeing a severe drought, migrated west and displaced tribes known as the Goths. The Goths then tried to move into the Roman empire in the late fourth century, and the strains that placed on the imperial system eventually helped bring about its collapse.

Later, great early medieval kingdoms were built by migrant peoples: France and Germany by the Franks; Burgundy by the Burgundians; England by the Angles and Saxons; and so on. Viking emigrants left their Scandinavian homelands, turning up everywhere from Constantinople to the Americas. In the seventh and eighth centuries, Arabic-speaking converts to a new religion, Islam, swept out of the Middle East to settle and conquer lands stretching from central Asia in the east to the Iberian peninsula in the west. Then there were the crusades, when migrant Europeans founded settler kingdoms in Palestine and Syria.

Finally, at the end of the Middle Ages, came perhaps the most significant migrant story of them all: Europeans striking out from the Old World, colonising the Americas (including the Caribbean) and forcibly transporting enslaved Africans to their new territories. We are still coming to terms with the legacy of that episode today.

Outbreaks of unrest

Lethal pandemics triggered mass protests and the rise of populism

When sickness strikes
An English engraving shows a man afflicted with the plague during the pandemic known as the Black Death, which was followed by protests and uprisings across Europe

A curious sight greeted London-based clerk Robert of Avesbury in September 1349: a parade of "flagellants" marching through the streets chanting prayers and whipping one another with scourges until blood flowed down their backs. It was a grisly procession, but it had a positive purpose: these adherents of a penitent sect were trying to persuade God to ease the grip of a pandemic that had seized every city in Europe – the first wave of the Black Death. This outbreak of plague, which began in Asia and swept into Europe through the cities of northern Italy, went on to kill between 40 and 60 per cent of the continent's population.

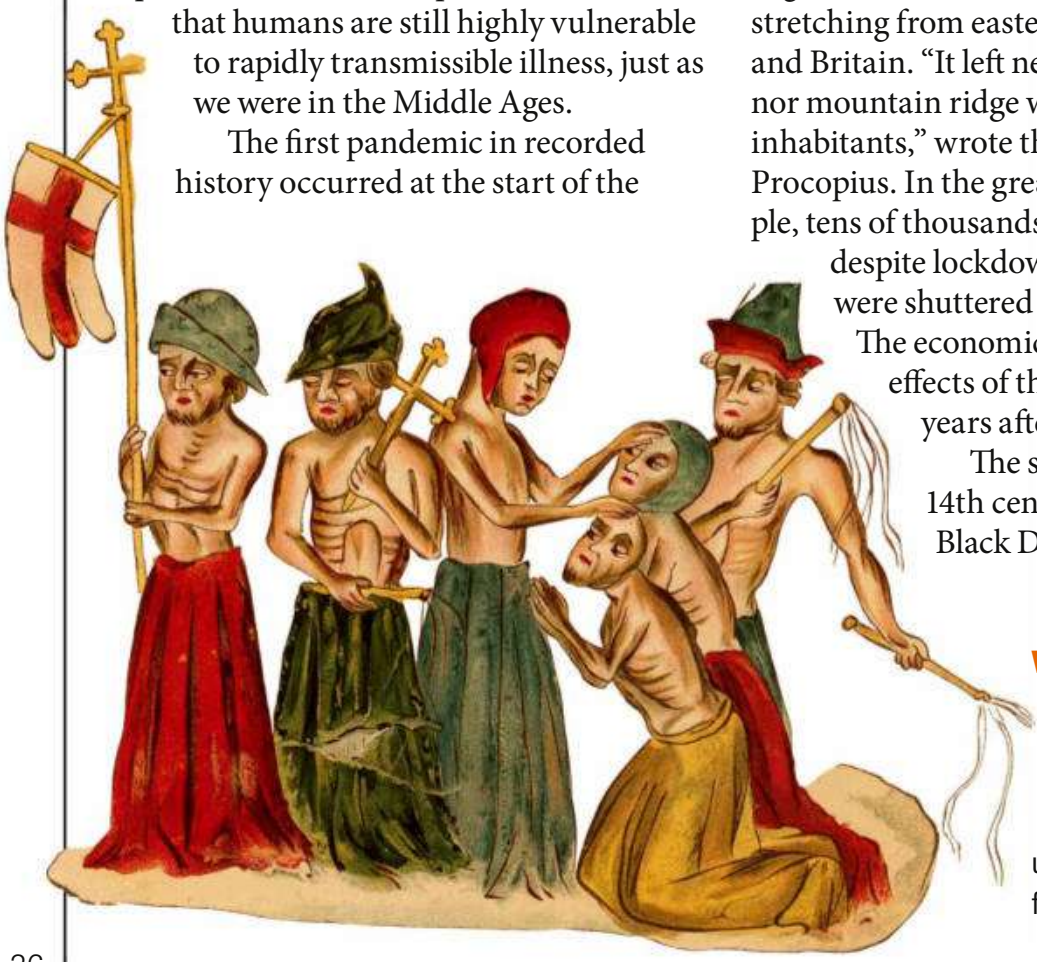
Today we do not recommend scourging parties as a cure for pandemic disease. (In fact, they would probably be called super-spreader events.) Most of us put our faith in science, not God, and in social distancing and vaccination rather than prayer and penance. Yet recent experience has shown that humans are still highly vulnerable to rapidly transmissible illness, just as we were in the Middle Ages.

The first pandemic in recorded history occurred at the start of the Middle Ages. The Plague of Justinian, which began in AD 541, killed millions in regions stretching from eastern Africa to Germany and Britain. "It left neither island nor cave nor mountain ridge which had human inhabitants," wrote the Byzantine historian Procopius. In the great city of Constantinople, tens of thousands died each week, despite lockdowns during which shops were shuttered and people hid indoors. The economic and psychological effects of the pandemic lasted for years afterwards.

The same was true in the 14th century. The impact of the Black Death was not limited to the enormous death toll. As wave after wave of disease rolled in, serious popular (and populist) upheaval occurred in almost every major European country. The region was shaken to its core by the shock of the pandemic, and movements promoting social justice proliferated.

The most concentrated period of unrest came between 1378 and 1382, shortly after a third wave of the Black Death had ripped through Europe. There were protests and riots in Florence in 1378, in southern France in 1379 and in northern France in 1380. In summer 1381, the Peasants' Revolt nearly brought down the government in England. In 1382, Paris was in uproar.

From the perspective of the 21st century, this may not seem surprising. We have seen in our own times the close links between disease, economic disruption and social protest movements. In that sense, we are not so different from our medieval predecessors.



Whipping up hope
Flagellants, adherents of a sect advocating public whipping as penitence, in a c1450 illustration. Some used this practice to beg God for relief from the Black Death

BRIDGEMAN/GETTY IMAGES

International trade
Ceramic products are carried along one of the long-distance trade routes known as the Silk Roads in a 15th-century painting. "The medieval world was always, in a sense, globalised," says Dan Jones

When the world grew smaller

Globalisation dawned as explorers sought out new trade routes

In 1245, an Italian friar called Giovanni da Pian del Carpine set out from the papal court to visit Mongolia. The Mongols were then a world superpower, and the khans' armies were well on their way to establishing the biggest empire since Rome's heyday. Del Carpine walked and rode for more than a year to reach the Mongols' royal court at Karakorum, where he witnessed the installation of a new ruler, Güyük Khan.

There, Carpine delivered a message from Pope Innocent IV, inviting Güyük to accept baptism and suggesting a military alliance against Muslims in the Holy Land. Güyük was unimpressed, and sent Carpine home with a reply ordering the pope to accept Mongol overlordship or suffer unpleasant consequences. It was not exactly the outcome Carpine had hoped for, but he had established links between the far east and western Christendom that would endure for generations.

The medieval world was always, in a sense, "globalised". Trade along the Silk Roads moved Chinese and Indian cloth and spices west. Gold mined in sub-Saharan Africa found its way to the Mediterranean. Slaves were traded widely long before the Atlantic crossings. For a brief moment around AD 1000, when a handful of Vikings settled in North America, it would have been theoretically possible for goods to move between every continent except Antarctica.

The late Middle Ages was a period of exceptionally busy growth in global trade. First, the Mongol conquests of the 13th century allowed travellers such as del Carpine and the Venetian explorer Marco Polo to forge direct links between the thriving trade cities of China and the western mercantile hubs of northern Italy and the Black Sea. In the 15th century, the expansion of the Islamic Ottoman empire made trade more difficult for Christians in the eastern Mediterranean – and the response was another wave of globalisation, albeit in a different direction.

Far eastern promise
Mongol ruler Güyük Khan (right), portrayed in a 1438 manuscript. A papal envoy who travelled to the ruler's court established long-lasting links with Christendom

Explorers including Christopher Columbus, Vasco da Gama and John Cabot, sponsored by monarchs in the soon-to-be imperial powers of Spain, Portugal and England, headed out in search of new routes to the east. They opened up global sea networks in two directions: west toward the Americas, and south and east around the southern tip of Africa into the Indian Ocean. This age of New World exploration marked the end of the Middle Ages. It brought enormous prosperity for some, abject misery for others, and a revolution in the way that people everywhere viewed the world.

Around AD 1000, it would have been theoretically possible for goods to move between every continent in the world but Antarctica

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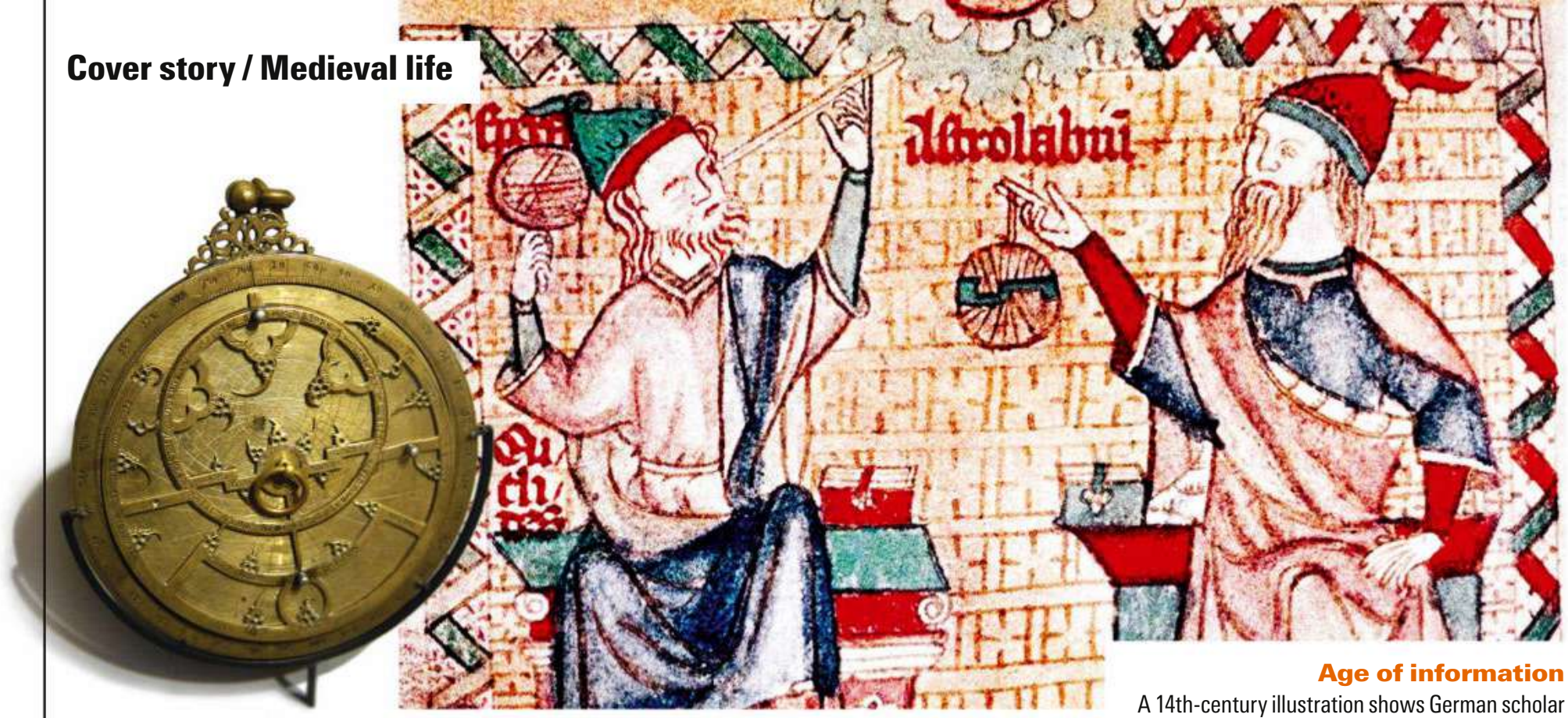

Age of information
A 14th-century illustration shows German scholar Hermann the Lame (right) with an astrolabe (also shown far left). This device for making astronomical measurements was invented by the ancient Greeks and recovered via medieval information exchange

A steep learning curve

An IT revolution produced everything from renewable energy to a "medieval iPhone"

In the 11th century, a physically disabled and extremely learned German monk called Hermann the Lame worked out how to build an astrolabe – a sophisticated piece of technology, since dubbed the "medieval iPhone", that was invaluable for timekeeping and navigation. It had been invented by the ancient Greeks but in the first half of the Middle Ages its secrets were understood only by the Byzantines and Arabs. From Hermann's time, however, Europeans began to study and build astrolabes, part of a revolution in learning and information exchange culminating in what is sometimes called the "12th-century renaissance".

This influx of new learning into Europe was driven by scholars who spent many hours translating ancient scientific and philosophical texts that had been preserved only in Arabic in the great libraries of the Islamic world. It transformed the intellectual landscape of the west.

Huge strides were made in astronomy, engineering, medicine and natural science, and major technological advances occurred as a result. Windmills harnessed "renewable energy" to grind grain into flour. New clocks, powered by water or weights, revolutionised timekeeping. Recipes for gunpowder started to change the nature of warfare. And institutions for teaching and research – the great universities – were founded.

An explosion in publishing led to a swing towards new forms of protest

This was an exciting age of change, but it was only one of several medieval information revolutions. The first took place from the late eighth century under the Frankish emperor Charlemagne, who sponsored large-scale manuscript production and preservation in monasteries. The last started in the 1450s when Johannes Gutenburg invented the moveable-type printing press – an innovation that made it cheap and easy to produce books, tracts, newsletters, pamphlets and any other sort of text.

The cultural effects of printing were as dramatic as the changes brought about by the rise of the smartphone. An explosion in publishing led to a swing towards new forms of protest and "culture wars". The Protestant Reformation was printed into existence with the publication of the works of Martin Luther in the early 16th century, and the vicious arguments it produced on the page were soon translated into real battles between partisans of the old ways and the new.

The Reformation brought down the curtain on the Middle Ages, but it was the product of a very medieval revolution. It is easy to believe that we are living today through a comparable reformation of social and cultural norms, underpinned – as then – by communication technology. H

Harnessing green energy
A 14th-century miller with his windmill – an innovation in the use of natural power that reached Europe during the 12th century

Dan Jones is a historian, TV presenter and journalist. His new book is *Powers & Thrones: A New History of the Middle Ages*, published by Apollo. He'll be talking about the book on the HistoryExtra podcast soon: *historyextra.com/podcast*

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"I hope we can make people feel that history is more generous and expansive than they had realised"

A new book edited by **Helen Carr** and **Suzannah Lipscomb** marks the 60th anniversary of EH Carr's *What Is History?* by asking that question anew for the 21st century

INTERVIEW BY **MATT ELTON**

ON THE HistoryExtra PODCAST

Matt Elton **Your new book is entitled *What Is History, Now?* What does it set out to do?**

Helen Carr It manifests the realisation that 2021 is the 60th anniversary of the *What Is History?* lectures delivered at the University of Cambridge by my great-grandfather, EH Carr. Those lectures were then published in a book that has become very well known among students of history, because its main point – that history is interpretation – was really ground-breaking and, in some ways, quite an antagonistic perspective at the time.

I felt that the anniversary provided a good opportunity to give the book a reappraisal – and this was before the momentous events of 2020, including the tragic death of George Floyd and the toppling of the Edward Colston statue in Bristol, which sparked so much conversation about history. I felt it was a very timely moment to revisit some key questions. What *is* history? Who does it belong to? How can we talk about it and tell it? And what are the ways in which people get into history?

Suzannah Lipscomb Other books have revisited EH Carr's work since it came out. David Cannadine edited an excellent one entitled *What Is History Now?* (without a comma!) in 2002, for instance. But our book is subtly different, and not just because of the extra punctuation. It's designed to allow lots of different people to give their perspectives on what history is today, and covers a whole range of subjects. Jaipreet Virdi discusses how we can write the history of disability, for instance; Caroline Dodds Pennock and Leila K Blackbird explore how history changes when you take the perspectives of indigenous peoples; and Maya Jasanoff looks at how we can write the history of empire. Some offer perspectives that EH Carr would have shared, whereas others have views he would not have thought of. There are fields of history, and ways of understanding history, that have been pioneered in the past 60 years, and we wanted to explore those.

The subtitle of our book – *How the Past and Present Speak to Each Other* – is crucial, too. We think that the present helps us to reflect on the past, that the past informs how we understand the present, and that history is about engaging with the myriad ways in which those things happen.

Past imperfect A Black Lives Matter protester in Dublin, June 2020. Recent political debates have focused on the role of history in shaping today's world

PREVIOUS PAGE:
A blind woman playing the violin, c1860. The question of how to tell the stories of people with disabilities is tackled in Helen Carr and Suzannah Lipscomb's book

ME **Why was EH Carr's book so controversial, and does this book attempt to engage with that controversy?**

HC EH Carr pushed back against the idea of history as an accepted series of facts. His book makes repeated use of a fishing analogy, with historians as anglers and facts like fish swimming around in an ocean. The history you end up producing depends on the tackle you use, the area of ocean in which you fish, and the other factors that affect the facts you pull out of the metaphorical "ocean". It's an idea that historians have really developed, and helps explain why history as a discipline is in constant flux, always moving and changing.

Because EH Carr originally delivered his arguments as a series of lectures, they were designed for an academic audience. We want this book to invite other people in, too: those interested in family history, for instance, or people who are into blockbuster movies such as [Ridley Scott's 2000 Roman epic] *Gladiator*. There are many ways into history.

ME **As you mentioned, the events of the past 18 months have thrust history into the headlines. Do you think history is particularly political now, or has that always been the case?**

HC I think there are peaks and troughs. We are living in a moment in which history is particularly political – but we can look at that in a positive way, because I think it has sparked conversations. It's brought history to the dinner table and to the pub. It's provoked debates among families, among friends and housemates, and over Zoom drinks, about the so-called "culture war" or what should be done with historical statues, for instance. History is in the news so much more now, and we hope that this book will help people to make up their own minds about how to look at history and how it informs our present. We also hope it shows people that history isn't an ivory-tower discipline but something with which everyone can engage.

SL I think we often suffer from myopia about the present. Though history is very politicised at the moment, it's easy for us to think: "Oh, it's more politicised than it's ever been." But actually, I'm sure we could come up with lots of examples of earlier periods in which it was just as politicised.

ME **Debates about historical statues have created a flashpoint in recent months; it's been suggested by some commentators that, by removing statues, we're rewriting history. What's your take on whether we should "rewrite" history?**

SL History is always being rewritten, and each generation rewrites history for itself. Each has a different perspective on the questions that it puts to historical records and texts – the type of fishing expedition that it's going on, in other words. For example, one of the key figures in the period on which I work is Catherine Howard, Henry VIII's fifth wife. Twenty years ago she was written about as someone who was promiscuous and "up for it". But she was a teenage girl, and I think that the #MeToo movement, particularly, means that we now have a different perspective on those kinds of issues. So I think that the present does inform the questions we ask of the past, and that history is always being rewritten – even before you factor in the possibility of finding new evidence that we didn't have before.

HC I completely agree. I think that history is always being rewritten because the person writing the history is always informed by their present. The chroniclers of the 14th century, for instance, or the antiquarian historians of the 19th century, had wildly

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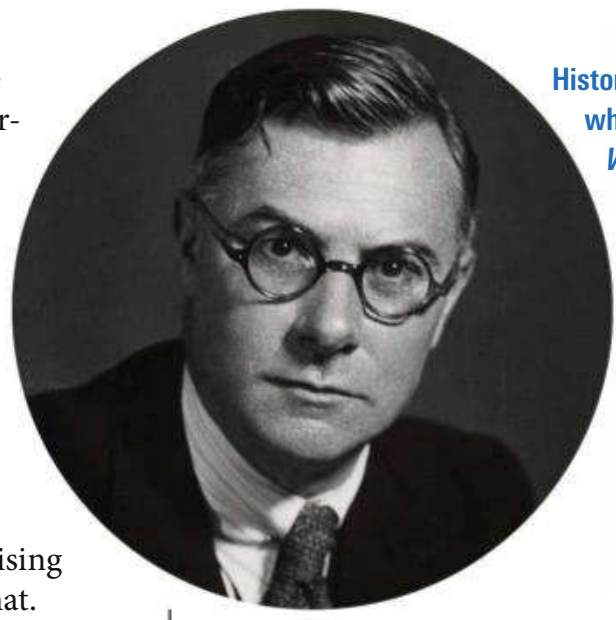
Broader horizons
Rock art by Aboriginal people in Kakadu National Park, Australia. Incorporating the perspectives of indigenous groups helps to reshape historical narratives

different viewpoints from those we might have today. So it's very important to revisit and rewrite history, because that's what makes it so interesting. It's not about erasing what's already been written, but about adding to the conversation.

SL And, crucially, we need to say – as EH Carr did – that this isn't about giving up striving for objectivity, or about not striving to reach the "truth". It's about recognising that it's not always possible to do that. We have to recognise that there is no way of approaching history other than through our own subjectivity, whether we think that's a good thing or not.

ME I was really struck by a line in Dan Hicks' chapter in the book on historical statues in which he writes: "In the 2020s, history takes place in the streets as well as in the libraries and the seminar rooms." Do we need to broaden our sense of what history is and who gets to write it?

SL Both Helen and I believe that history is something written by scholars, but also something that – in the words of historian Raphael Samuel – is "the work of a thousand hands". History should be not just for the few but for the many. Somebody outside the academy can write successful, high-quality history, and someone inside can write



Historian EH Carr, whose 1961 book *What Is History?* sparked debate about whether our view of the past can be objective

> **"History is always being rewritten, because the person writing the history is always informed by their present"**
> HELEN CARR

something that fails on all of those counts. It should also come from family histories, and from among communities, and from local museums. For that reason, we asked [curator and cultural historian] Gus Casely-Hayford to contribute an essay on how museums open doors to the past: we are interested in the fact that there's history in heritage.

HC That's also why we have an essay by [historian and screenwriter] Alex von Tunzelmann exploring why history should be at the movies. Going to the cinema might inspire someone to study history and conduct their own research. So all of these mediums contribute something, and are all in dialogue with each other.

ME In his chapter about the importance of global history, Peter Frankopan draws an explicit line between recent Black Lives Matter protests and the role that historians play in dealing with the realities of the past, arguing that a failure to do so has contributed to our current political situation. That gives history a huge, exciting amount of power, doesn't it?

SL The histories we tell are generally based on the accounts of the powerful. The people in power in the past were usually the ones who were literate, and who were in a position to contribute material to archives and have artefacts kept. Their perspectives, generally, are ones that justify their power. So it's very

ALAMY/NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Hidden histories
Formerly enslaved people in the US, 1862. The failure to engage with stories of history's less powerful people has fuelled current tensions, argues Suzannah Lipscomb

much true that if we base our histories just on those narratives, we don't allow for the stories of people who were *not* powerful – and that, I think, has contributed to things such as the reckoning with the legacy of slavery that is currently happening in the US. The legacy of the enslavement of so many millions of people did not end when slavery was abolished – rather, its ripples have continued to fan out across time.

The failure to recognise how that still impacts on those societies is ultimately a choice to believe a narrative of history that was written by those in power. So Peter is completely right: history and how we tell it is powerful, which is of course one reason why the current UK government is making such a fuss about it.

HC I think it goes back to the question of rewriting history. Who wrote these histories in the first place? Who were the people with the privilege to write this down? It certainly wouldn't have been the illiterate, and probably wouldn't have been the busy mothers either, for instance. What were their agendas? That's why checking the words of the powerful, the people who wrote these histories, is incredibly important.

ME Would you like this book to change the ways in which people view history and what it can be?

HC Yes – absolutely. We hope it intrigues people and invites people into history. In the past, people have said to me: "Oh, I just can't get along with remembering all those dates and facts." I hope our book shows that history can instead be a wonderful conversation and debate. There are so many aspects of history, and so many treasures to be uncovered once you engage with it.

SL I hope it makes people feel that history is more generous and expansive than they had hitherto realised. I expect that they'll find the book provocative, in some ways that are intellectually stimulating and in others that they completely disagree with. Those are both valid responses!

ME Finally, to end with an impossibly huge question, what do you think is the purpose of history?

SL That's such a broad question! For me, if we narrow it down, the study of the past has the ability to make us more empathetic, to care about people other than ourselves. I'm sure that if you spend time thinking about women in the 14th century, to cite just one example, you'll care more about your neighbours than you otherwise would, because you're engaging with the mentalities of people other than yourself. I also think that history poses a series of challenges to us about what we think is the right way to live, because it gives us many, many examples of ways in which people have lived differently. There's a lot of ego-deflating that should happen when it comes to the study of history, I think!

> **"The study of the past has the ability to make us more empathetic – to care about people other than ourselves"**
> SUZANNAH LIPSCOMB

Something else that the study of history does is that it teaches you how to think. It teaches you how to critically assess things, and to work out whether you're being fed a lie – which seem quite useful qualities in today's world.

HC I would definitely agree that history makes you look at things with a critical eye. What's the agenda of the person who's written this? Where has it come from, and what other opinions are there on the subject? It's a very useful discipline just for the everyday practice of living within modern society.

But, for me, history is also about stories. It's about the lives that have been lived, the events that have happened, and the tangible objects and places that have been left behind. When you explore a great castle or other historic place, would your view be the same as those of the people who trod that ground before you? What would their experiences have been? Being able to step into the shoes of people of the past is a unique and beautiful experience, and I think it's so rewarding to be able to enjoy history in that way.

And it's also about watching the progression of history. How did we, as a people, move forward? What did we learn and not learn? History is still happening as we speak. The development of Covid-19 vaccines, for instance, is a massive example of medical history in the making that we have all just lived through and watched unfurl. Looking at the past in that way can also be a way of being able to understand it in the present.

Helen Carr is a writer and historian whose books include *The Red Prince: John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster* (OneWorld, 2021)

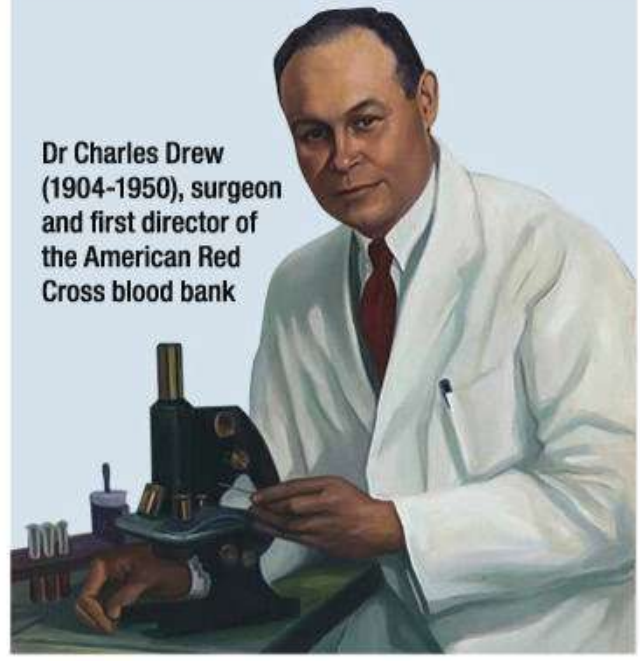
Suzannah Lipscomb is a historian and broadcaster, and author of *The Voices of Nîmes: Women, Sex, and Marriage in Reformation Languedoc* (OUP, 2019)

What Is History, Now? is published by W&N in September. You can hear more from this conversation on our podcast: *historyextra.com/podcast*

GETTY IMAGES

Junior Red Cross members from the Antigua branch of the British Red Cross fundraising during Red Cross Week, 1974

Dr John Alcindor (1873-1924), British Red Cross volunteer doctor, WW1



Dr Charles Drew (1904-1950), surgeon and first director of the American Red Cross blood bank

Black history is British history

By Mehzebin Adam, curator, British Red Cross Museum and Archives

From the First World War to the present day, Black people have worked with the British Red Cross to assist those in need, no matter who or where they are. Dr John Alcindor, born in Trinidad, was a physician and activist for racial equality who overcame prejudice and discrimination to help others during the First World War. During the war, the Royal Army Medical Corps rejected him because of his origin. However, Dr Alcindor persisted with his desire to help those in need by joining the British Red Cross as a volunteer, where he treated countless wounded soldiers returning to London from the battlefields. He was later awarded a Red Cross medal for his life-saving work.

The British Red Cross formed overseas branches in countries which were part of the British empire. Some have remained branches of the British Red Cross, while countries that later became independent formed their own Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies. Volunteers and staff from our overseas branches have played, and continue to play, a key role in the work of the British Red Cross, from providing vital healthcare to responding to natural disasters.

Black people have made significant contributions to the humanitarian sector. For example, Dr Charles Drew, an African-American surgeon and the first director of the American Red Cross blood bank, was one of the most influential scientists of the 20th century. In 1938, he developed a method for preserving blood that allowed it to be stored for longer, and he assisted with the Blood for Britain programme to help injured soldiers and civilians in Britain during the Second World War.

The work of individuals such as Dr Drew reflects the unity of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which connects people with a shared goal: to spread the power of kindness.

LEAVE A LEGACY

The work of the British Red Cross is made possible through the generous gifts left in wills, gifts that ensure that those in need can be cared for in years to come. To contribute and leave a lasting gift of kindness, you may want to consider leaving a gift in your will. A free will-writing service is available for supporters to get a basic will written or updated for free. Although there is no obligation to leave a gift, by choosing to do so, your gift would be a lifeline to people in need during their darkest hour.

Will you help us spread the power of kindness?

FIND OUT MORE

▶ Explore other Black humanitarians and learn more about Black history on our online exhibition:
redcross.org.uk/black-history

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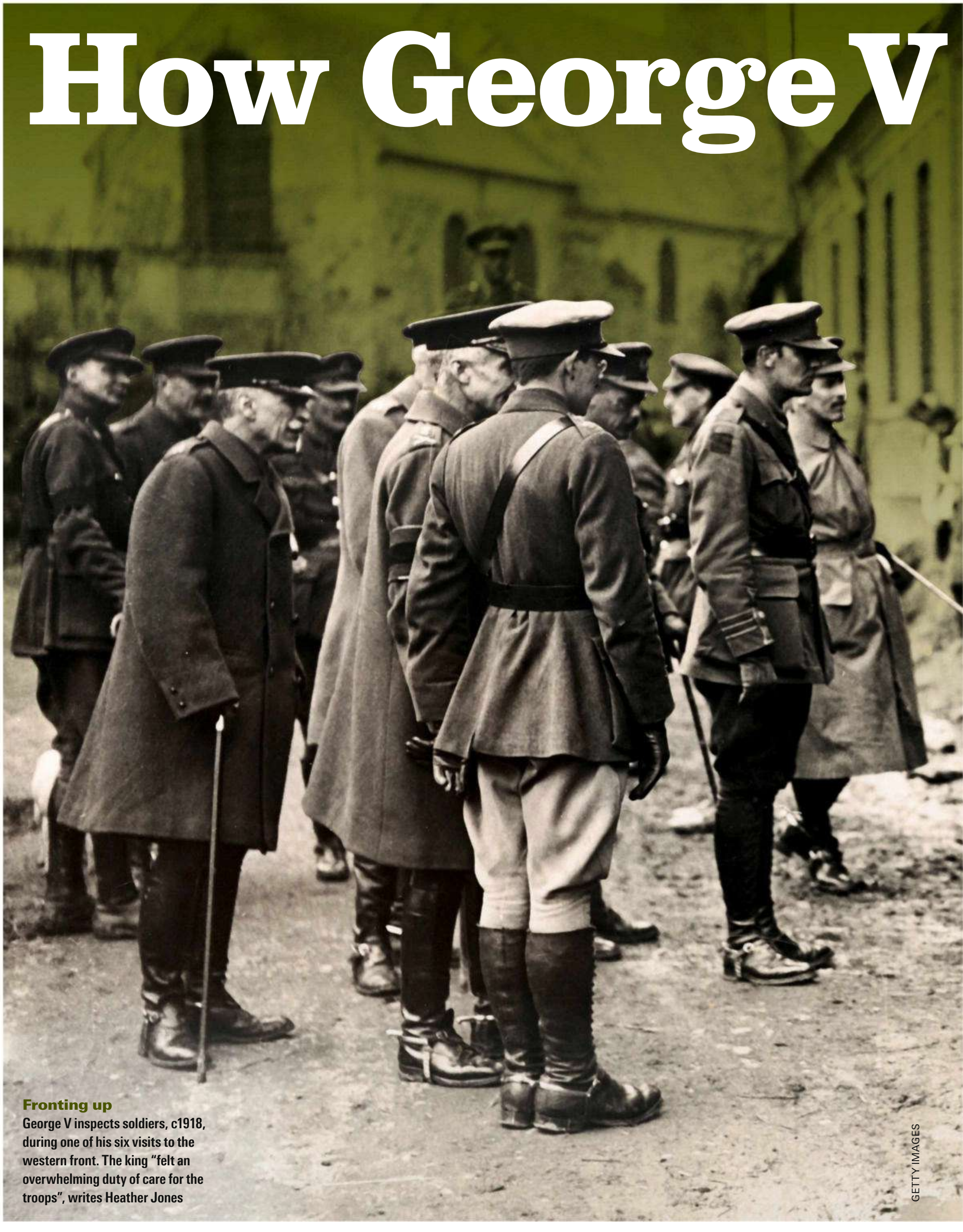
BritishRedCross

For more information about supporting the British Red Cross with a gift in your will and the Free Will scheme, visit redcross.org.uk/freewill or call 0300 500 0401

How George V



Fronting up
George V inspects soldiers, c1918, during one of his six visits to the western front. The king "felt an overwhelming duty of care for the troops", writes Heather Jones

GETTY IMAGES

won the war

The First World War ushered many European monarchies to extinction. But not in Britain. **Heather Jones** reveals how – through canny PR and genuine compassion for the troops – the royal family emerged from the conflict stronger than ever

"You can't conceive what I suffered going round those hospitals in the war," George V confided in a friend after the First World War. The great global conflict that erupted in 1914 is often described as one that was waged "for *king* and country". Yet, today there is little public awareness of the crucial role the monarchy played during the conflagration. Even *The Crown* – Netflix's wildly popular series about the royals' trials and tribulations over the past century – described George V spending the conflict collecting stamps.

The reality is very different. The First World War represented a monumental test for both the monarch and the nation. It was fought on an unprecedented scale, requiring the full mobilisation of society. The royal family was integral to this process.

In 1914, the king embodied the British state and empire. He was the most important symbol of British identity. This is why, at the outbreak of the war, he was front and centre in a surge of patriotic recruitment material. Posters and speeches played on the nation's romantic attachment to their king, encouraging men to do their duty to him and fight. In 1915, George personally backed an army recruitment drive via a direct Royal Appeal.

Duty also applied to the royal family itself. From the king down to the most minor of royals, the monarchy felt an immense obligation to support the war effort. At the outbreak of the conflict, George's wife, Queen Mary, took charge of mobilising women in the UK to knit clothing for the troops; her Needlework Guild had 60,000 members in London alone. The Prince of Wales' National Relief Fund was set up to provide aid to those suffering penury due to the conflict. By the end of 1914, Edward, Prince of Wales, was serving as a staff officer at the front, while Prince Albert, the king's second son (and future George VI), was in the navy and would serve in the battle of Jutland.

For Christmas 1914, Princess Mary, the monarch's only daughter, set up a fund to send a Princess Mary Gift Box to all serving soldiers and sailors. This was the first time that the war's working-class troops, many of whom did not yet have the vote, had received any form of national recognition.

In the early stages of the war, the king ceased all royal entertaining and cut luxurious foods from royal menus, telling his chef that visitors "should be grateful for anything". He then donated £100,000 of the money he'd saved to the Treasury. He famously gave up alcohol during the war, something the writer and soldier CE Montague noted made him popular with troops who saw it as an unexpected "act of willing comradeship with the dry throat on the march". The women of the royal family – in particular Queen Mary – regularly served refreshments to soldiers in railway stations and to war workers in deprived districts.

A king in the crossfire

George believed he should inspect all troops heading overseas to fight in his name – so much so that soldiers soon realised that a royal review meant they were about to leave for the front. He felt an overwhelming duty of care for the troops and visited the front six times during the war, hoping to boost morale, check on soldiers' well-being and show royal empathy for what they were enduring.

These visits were not without risk. Sir Charles Cust, the king's equerry, noted that, on 26 October 1915, while the royal

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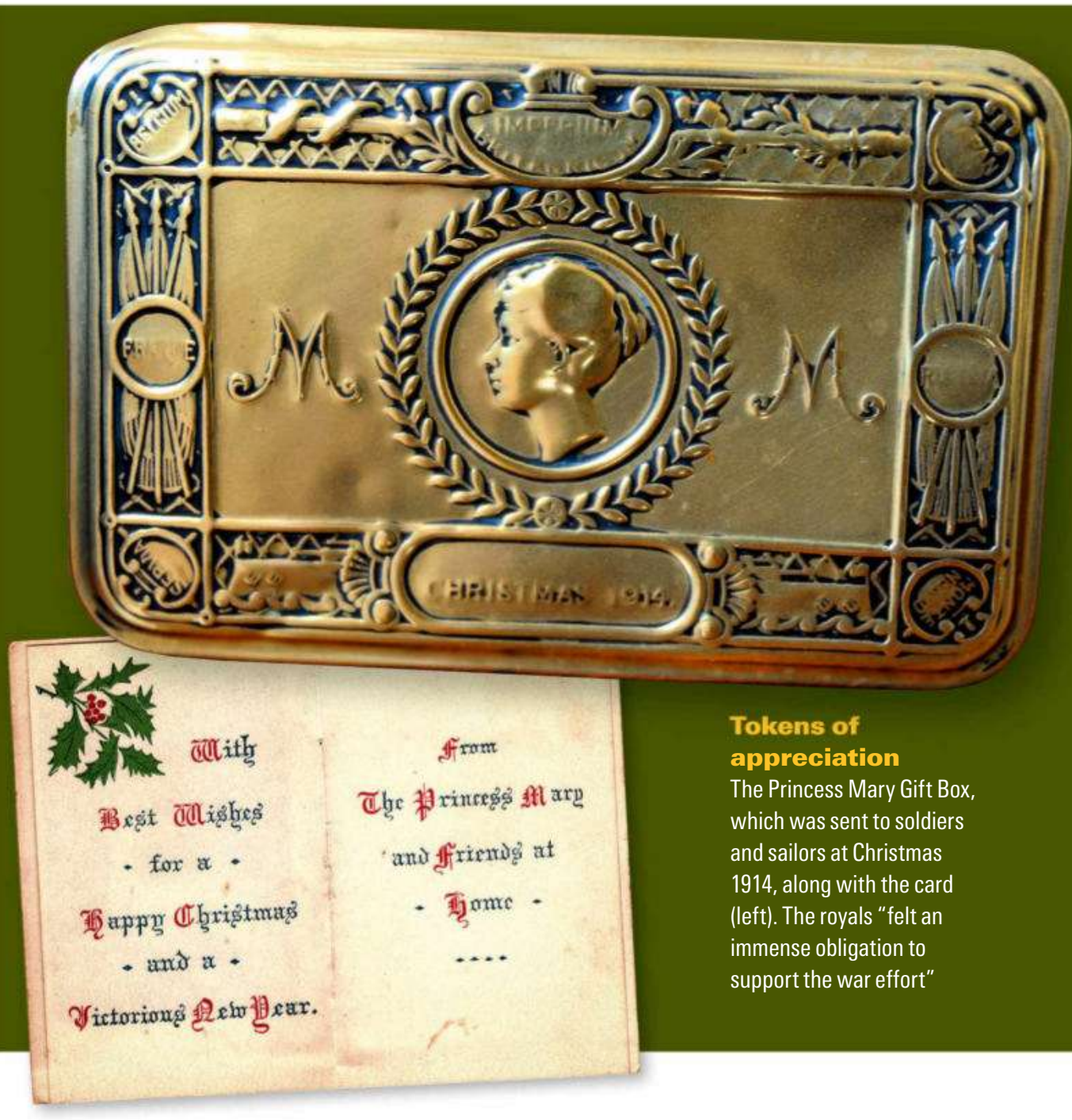
Royal request
George V was placed front and centre in the recruitment drive that accompanied the outbreak of war, as this poster from 1914 shows



Tokens of appreciation
The Princess Mary Gift Box, which was sent to soldiers and sailors at Christmas 1914, along with the card (left). The royals "felt an immense obligation to support the war effort"

party was in the communication trenches, "the German batteries fired three shells over their heads". On the same trip, the king suffered a life-threatening accident when his charger reared and fell upon him. He had to be transported home in a hospital train. On other occasions the Germans shelled locations just after he had left.

The most remarkable royal visit to the front occurred shortly after the start of the Ludendorff offensives in late March 1918, a massive German onslaught that aimed to force the Allies to sue for peace. With British forces in headlong retreat, the king travelled to France for a three-day visit that saw him visiting casualty clearing stations, and witnessing "very sad and dreadful sights" among the wounded.

While one soldier, Raynor Taylor, recalled war-weary troops refusing to cheer the king during this 1918 trip, this was unusual. Soldiers, for the most part, appreciated the monarch's efforts. When, in the 1930s, schoolchildren were asked to explain the king's popularity, many cited his visits to the frontline almost 20 years earlier.

Although he was only symbolically commander-in-chief, with no command role, the king liaised constantly with the generals and was quick to inform them of his opinions. He was crucial in Douglas Haig retaining his position as commander in the field after Haig had lost the confidence of Prime Minister David Lloyd George. The king witnessed the start of the battle of Amiens on 8 August 1918 and on that same day, during an artillery inspection, he ordered a heavy artillery gun to fire on Douai station, scoring a direct hit on a German troop train.

With the British in retreat, the king rushed to the front, where he witnessed "very sad and dreadful sights"

On the home front, the king and queen constantly visited war factories, shipyards and, most importantly, the war wounded in hospital. A wounded officer, Lieutenant DC Burn, recalled that he "had a long talk" with the king in his ward and "found his guttural voice and laugh very engaging".

The king personally conferred 50,000 awards for gallantry during the war, in many cases to badly disabled men or to distressed next-of-kin. Sometimes war widows brought their small children up to receive their dead father's medal. "If it wasn't for you I should break down," the king wrote to Queen Mary.

Honouring the wounded

The introduction of conscription in 1916 was accompanied by an emphasis on the burdens of the war being shared equitably. This new spirit of egalitarianism even extended to Buckingham Palace, which hosted a series of tea parties at which hundreds of war wounded of all ranks were treated as honoured guests, served by the royals themselves. (One newspaper noted that Prince Albert carried the teapot.) Ordinary people were encountering the monarchy in newly personal ways – and that only served to enhance the wartime popularity of the crown.

The royals constantly witnessed wartime

MARY EVANS

Royal blessing Portraits of Queen Mary and King George, sent to troops at Christmas 1914. Printed on the back were the words: "May God protect you and bring you home safe"

death. Frederick Ponsonby, the keeper of the Privy Purse, described the king visiting a hospital near the front in 1915. "Some of the men there had been gassed and it was painful to watch them, blue in the face and gasping for breath. I found one was a German and regretted the pity I had wasted on him; but the king rebuked me and said that after all he was only a poor dying human being, in no way responsible for the German horrors."

When working-class districts of east London were subjected to a major Gotha bombing raid on 13 June 1917, killing 162 people, George visited the bombed-out areas within hours. Queen Alexandra, the king's mother, also visited in the evening to condole with the mothers of 18 children who died when their school at Poplar suffered a direct hit.

Pulses of unrest

While the British royal family handed out medals, visited the front and consoled the widows of fallen soldiers, their counterparts on the continent were facing a series of existential threats. From 1917, Europe was convulsed by a wave of revolutions, often virulently anti-monarchist in their aims.

The British royals weren't entirely insulated from these pulses of unrest. The second half of the war saw a limited increase in anti-monarchism here, too – and, when the February Revolution toppled Russian tsar Nicholas II, elements in the leftwing press were quick to wonder aloud if this was a fate that awaited *all* European monarchies. Left-leaning politicians also voiced their concerns that, overwhelmed by the demands of a long war, the cabinet was increasingly passing legislation via the Privy Council rather than parliament, using the royal prerogative.

While George V handed out medals, Europe was convulsed by a wave of virulently anti-royalist revolutions

It was around this time that sustained press criticism of the British royal family's continental connections first appeared, shining an unsympathetic light on the fact that George V was a cousin of Russia's Nicholas II, the German kaiser Wilhelm II and unpopular pro-German Greek king, Constantine I. George V's response to this new threat was ingenious – and ruthless. In 1917, he changed the name of his dynasty from the Germanic "Saxe-Coburg and Gotha" to "Windsor", and he pressurised the government into rescinding its offer of asylum to the tsar, who was later murdered with his family by revolutionaries in July 1918.

This dual response may have been radical, but it worked. As 1917 progressed, press coverage become more favourable. Journalists increasingly noted the king's support of the extension of suffrage in the UK, and his willingness to engage with ordinary workers. They hailed the British royal family's exceptionalism from other European monarchies; it was different, they argued, because it was "democratic". The widely popular name change to Windsor was cited as an example of this exceptionalism.

So, despite the rocky ride of 1917, anti-monarchism in Britain ultimately remained fragmented and marginalised. Even the leftwing *Daily Herald* was forced to concede that republicanism was not "of any importance comparable with the economic issue between capital and labour".

In a bid to cement their popularity across the political spectrum, George and Mary reached out personally to wartime Labour figures. Returning from a visit to revolutionary Russia, radical Labour MP Will Thorne was immediately invited to visit the king. He

War witness
A British tank passes German stretcher-bearers during the battle of Amiens, August 1918. George V travelled to France to witness the start of this major Allied victory in person

MARY EVANS

GETTY IMAGES

Cousins at war
George V (right) with Kaiser Wilhelm II in Germany. While the British king struck up a rapport with his nation's soldiers, his German cousin cut a distant, aloof figure

The brotherhood illusion

George V promised racial equality among imperial troops. Yet, writes Heather Jones, his armies failed to deliver

When Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, the British empire also automatically entered the conflict. However, its diverse populations saw the monarchy's role in very different ways.

Many white troops from the dominions, particularly those who were first-generation immigrants from Britain, rushed to volunteer and cited serving the king as a motivation. Others were far more cynical. One white South African soldier flippantly referred to the king's message of farewell to his regiment as a "kiss-me-goodbye" message. Some Australian units expressed anti-monarchist sentiments. Australian major Frank Weir wrote: "There is talk of the PRINCE coming out to review us – educating a man for a job I doubt he will ever get – & our men are restless."

Such cynicism was far less evident among black and Asian troops, some of whom regarded the monarchy as a potential emancipatory force against local racist regimes within the empire. In 1915, George V issued an appeal to the empire for volunteers in which he referred to all imperial subjects as brothers. In a speech in Abbeville in 1917, the king told an audience of black South African labourers that his armies were fighting for "liberty and freedom of my subjects of all races and creeds throughout my empire". George also supported the formation of a West Indies Regiment, in doing so, setting himself at odds with the War Office, which objected to black men serving as combatants.

These events inspired hopes that the war would lead to imperial reforms bringing greater racial equality within the empire. Censored letters from Indian troops suggest significant levels of loyalty to the "King-Emperor" and expectations that the monarch would intervene to improve the treatment of India's wounded. Meanwhile, the King's Appeal for volunteers boosted recruitment in Jamaica.

Yet the hopes inspired by monarchist rhetoric on greater equality proved empty. There was widespread racial discrimination against black and Asian men in the armed forces. Black South African labourer Jacob Koos Matli wrote of how nearly every evening his camp was attacked by enemy planes and the unarmed labourers left to their fate. They formed a committee and wrote to the king for help, even though, as black labourers, they were even denied independent postal access. "We gave the letter to one of the soldiers to post for us, since we were not allowed to go out of camp." Wounded Indian troops being treated in the Brighton Royal Pavilion were prohibited from leaving the hospital grounds.

As part of its 1919 visit to England, a South African Native National Congress deputation sent a petition to the monarch reminding him of his July 1917 speech at Abbeville: why were "liberty and freedom" still denied to them following the war? Their petition was not transmitted to the king, and the Colonial Office refused the deputation's request to meet the monarch. It is doubtful he ever knew of it.

George V believed in an ideal of universal subjecthood – that he had an equal duty of care to all his people regardless of class, race or creed. Unfortunately, his wartime army and imperial governments held a different view entirely. And so the discrimination continued.

George V inspects the South African Native Labour Corps at Abbeville, 1917. During the visit, the king would tell the troops that they were fighting for the liberty of all "races and creeds"

IWM Q_005623

Giving thanks
Queen Mary presents a pipe and tobacco to a wounded soldier in Richmond, 1918. Thanks to such displays of compassion, the monarchy emerged from the war more popular than ever

was won over: "I had expected to meet a haughty, stand-offish man with a highly polished university twang; but I found him a very different person."

In 1917, faced with widespread strikes in the north of England and Glasgow, the cabinet sent the king and queen to the striking areas to calm the situation. This does not suggest a monarchy in danger of being swept away by revolution.

Defeated and toppled

Victory in the war mattered. Defeated nations were far more likely to see their monarchies toppled. But how these monarchies handled the war was also significant. Aloofness to the suffering of the people often triggered anti-monarchism, which in turn drove revolution. It was no accident that the British, Belgian and Italian monarchies – who displayed compassion for the sufferings of troops and workers, and made a point of tightening their purse strings in the face of wartime austerity – all survived.

Kaiser Wilhelm, by contrast, rarely visited munitions factories or Germany's wounded during the conflict – a fact that contributed to his overthrow in November 1918.

Just after the Armistice, the British monarchy was described in parliament as existing "by consent" of the people. This was an institution, it was claimed, whose raison d'etre was to serve its subjects – unlike those autocratic dynasties collapsing on the

By the end of the war, the royal family had found a new role: that of key symbolic conduit for national grief

continent. This may have been a generous interpretation of the reality. Yet there was little doubt that King George V and Queen Mary's wartime efforts to support ordinary people meant that this rhetoric of "service" was no idle phrase. Their determination to stay connected to the people had given Britain's crown a fresh purpose as a new era dawned of mass democracy and of greater socio-economic and political freedoms.

So, instead of hastening the British monarchy to extinction, the First World War gave the royal family greater relevance and new roles – one of which was to become the key symbolic conduit for national and imperial war grief. The king sent letters of condolence to families of the fallen throughout the conflict, and was chief mourner at the burial of the unknown warrior in Westminster Abbey. By honouring the war dead in this way, the monarchy enhanced its own image and purpose.

But successfully overcoming the challenges of the First World War had taken a huge emotional toll on the royals. When, in the 1930s, international tensions rose once more, George V raged at David Lloyd George: "I will not have another war. I will *not*. The last war was none of my doing, & if there is another one & we are threatened with being brought in to it, I will go to Trafalgar Square and wave a red flag myself sooner than allow this country to be brought in."

George V was haunted for the rest of his life by the horrors he had witnessed during the First World War. The royal family, he believed, must always serve the people devotedly to honour their terrible sacrifices. This ethos would inform the rest of his reign – and remains the conflict's primary legacy to the modern monarchy. H

Heather Jones is professor in modern and contemporary European history at University College London. Her book *For King and Country: The British Monarchy and the First World War* is published by Cambridge on 16 September

LISTEN Heather Jones presented **The Frontline Prince**, a BBC Radio 4 documentary about the future Edward VIII's experiences in the First World War. Listen here: *bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b0952jkk*

ALAMY

Progressive potter
Josiah Wedgwood (1730–95) on a portrait medallion. As well as pioneering new types of pottery, he also imbued his work with political radicalism
BACKGROUND IMAGE:
Etruria, Wedgwood's pottery factory in Stoke-on-Trent

IMAGE © FISKARS, PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS LOOF. V&A WEDGWOOD COLLECTION/BRIDGEMAN

The RADICAL father of English pottery

Josiah Wedgwood is renowned for his iconic and innovative ceramics. But, as **Tristram Hunt** explains, the designer also had an activist streak that he embedded in his earthenware

ON THE HistoryExtra PODCAST

On 26 September 1792, Earl Macartney set sail from Portsmouth aboard HMS *Lion*, accompanied by the East Indiaman *Hindostan*. After stalling in squally weather off Torbay, they skirted Brittany before sailing south to Madeira, round the Cape of Good Hope and then east to the Chinese port city of Tientsin (Tianjin). Counted among the passengers were nearly 100 of Georgian Britain's finest brains – natural philosophers, instrument makers and draughtsmen – and, as importantly, some 600 crates of artefacts and objects carefully chosen to showcase the advanced thinking and industrial might of Great Britain.

A taste of Britain
A ceramic cauliflower teapot with a vivid green glaze, c1760, designed by Wedgwood. His vases were sent to China to encourage a trade deal

Macartney's mission was to convince the Chinese to open up their huge markets to imports from Britain – "to excite at Peking a taste for many articles of English workmanship hitherto unknown there". So he laid before the "Celestial Court" a vast array of textiles and trade goods. Most remarkably, he took china to China, in the form of six Wedgwood vases. In the official register of Goods Purchased for the Embassy to China, "Wedgwood Jasperware" valued at £169.17.0 stands as perhaps the most outrageous testament to an unwavering British belief in its design and manufacturing prowess.

It was an inspired choice. What Josiah Wedgwood – the father of English pottery – had achieved was of global significance.

During the final decades of the 18th century, he turned the tide on Chinese porcelain imports and made Great Britain the epicentre of ceramics. In the words of his epitaph, Wedgwood converted "a rude and inconsiderable manufacture into an elegant art, and an important branch of national commerce".

The impact was felt around the world. "Its excellent workmanship; its solidity; its fine glaze, impenetrable to acids; the beauty, convenience, and variety of its forms, and its moderate price, have created a commerce so universal that in travelling from Paris to St Petersburg, from Amsterdam to the furthest point of Sweden one is served at every inn from English earthenware," wrote the French travel writer Barthélémy Faujas de Saint Fond after his visit to Britain in 1784.

Alongside the pottery came the politics. Wedgwood was a radical who not only transformed the ceramic industry but also played an active role in promoting democracy and progressive change around the world. He embedded within his earthenware all the 18th century's great themes: Enlightenment, liberty and national identity. To my mind, he deserves to be recognised as much for his radical patriotism as for technical ingenuity.

Wedgwood's global reach was all the more surprising given the limitations of his upbringing. Born in 1730 in Burslem, the "Mother Town" of Stoke-on-Trent, his family had worked as potters in north Staffordshire for generations. By the mid-1700s, the close proximity of clay and coal had helped to turn that narrow vale of the Midlands into a moderately prosperous ceramics cluster of potbanks and bottle-kilns.

Wedgwood's genius, however, accelerated the Potteries (as the region was known) into a crucible of the industrial revolution, and made his name a byword for design excellence. The 19th-century prime minister WE Gladstone put it this way: "Wedgwood was the greatest man who ever, in any age, or in any country… applied himself to the important work of uniting art with industry." His marriage of technology and design, retail precision and manufacturing efficiency transformed the production of pottery and ushered in a mass consumer society.

The brilliance was born partly of adversity. Smallpox swept through Burslem during the 1740s, and the Wedgwood family were badly infected with this potentially fatal disease. In Josiah's case, his right knee took the brunt of the infection: forever weakened, requiring crutches or a cane, this disability prevented him from operating the foot pedal on the potter's wheel, so he could never be a thrower. Instead, design, innovation and business were aspects of the pottery trade that would draw his attention. Nearly a quarter of a century later, on 31 May 1768 – which Wedgwood christened "Saint Amputation Day" – his leg was removed entirely with a saw just below the right knee, without any anaesthetic. He was quickly rechristened "owd wooden leg" by his pottery workers.

He bagged the greatest sponsor of them all in Queen Charlotte, who turned creamware into "Queensware"

Pineapple teapots

Wedgwood's fusion of art and industry was first apparent in his remarkable use of glazes while working as a junior partner to potter Thomas Whieldon. Incredible rococo designs – pineapple-inspired teapots; cauliflower-coloured plates – began to emerge from Wedgwood's experimentation.

But the key breakthrough came in the mid-1760s with creamware. Building upon the work of Enoch Booth, Wedgwood designed a clean, functional and elegant alternative to Chinese porcelain that was both sturdier and cheaper to produce. "It forms for the table a species of pottery of firm and durable body, and covered with a rich and brilliant glaze," one contemporary wrote, "and it was accompanied also with the advantages of being manufactured with ease and expedition." The smooth, fine-textured body also allowed for an easy application of decoration – by applying transfers or painting with enamels – which meant the pottery could swiftly follow fashion or encompass individual commissions of table services.

With rising real incomes and a fickle consumer market, the challenge for Wedgwood and his business partner, the cultured Liverpool merchant Thomas Bentley, was how to get his creamware noticed by a discerning public. Here was where Wedgwood's marketing brilliance stepped in. "Fashion is infinitely superior to merit in many respects," he once reflected, "and it is plain from a thousand instances that if you have a favourite child you wish the public to fondle and take notice of, you have only to make choice of proper sponcors [sic]."

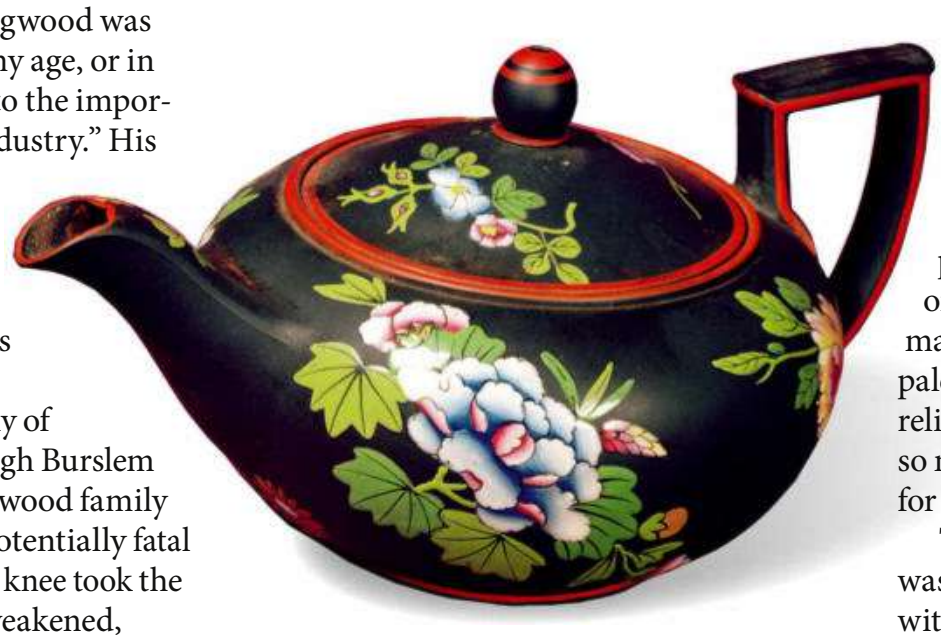
Brilliantly, he bagged the greatest sponsor of them all in Queen Charlotte, whose patronage of his tableware service turned creamware into "Queensware" and elevated Wedgwood into "Master Potter to Her Majesty". He was so focused on his high-society promoters that he even named one of his flower pots "Devonshire", after that duchess. "A name has a wonderful effect I assure you," he knowingly informed Bentley.

Indeed, there is barely a technique in modern salesmanship – from product placement to the use of influencers – that Wedgwood and Bentley did not pioneer. Wedgwood's West End showroom was, like so many today, more commercial gallery than shop. He created a space "to shew various Table & desert services completely set out on two ranges of Tables… in order to do the needful with the Ladys in the neatest, genteelest & best method".

At the same time, his creation of one of the first modern factories at Etruria (named after the pre-classical civilisation) in Stoke-on-Trent ensured efficient delivery of ornamental pottery and tableware, and previously unseen levels of sustained, high-quality production.

After Queensware came Black Basalt, pearlware and, above all, Jasper – the most original and beautiful of all the ceramic materials Wedgwood pioneered. Even today a pale-blue Jasper body with white neo-classical reliefs instantly signals Wedgwood – source of so much subsequent imitation and inspiration for designers and artists over the centuries.

The invention of Jasper in the mid-1770s was the result of years of experimentation with clays, kilns, cobalt and iron oxide carried out by Wedgwood in his basement laboratory. For alongside his marketing and design brilliance, Wedgwood was a scientist whose clay trials and calculations on kiln

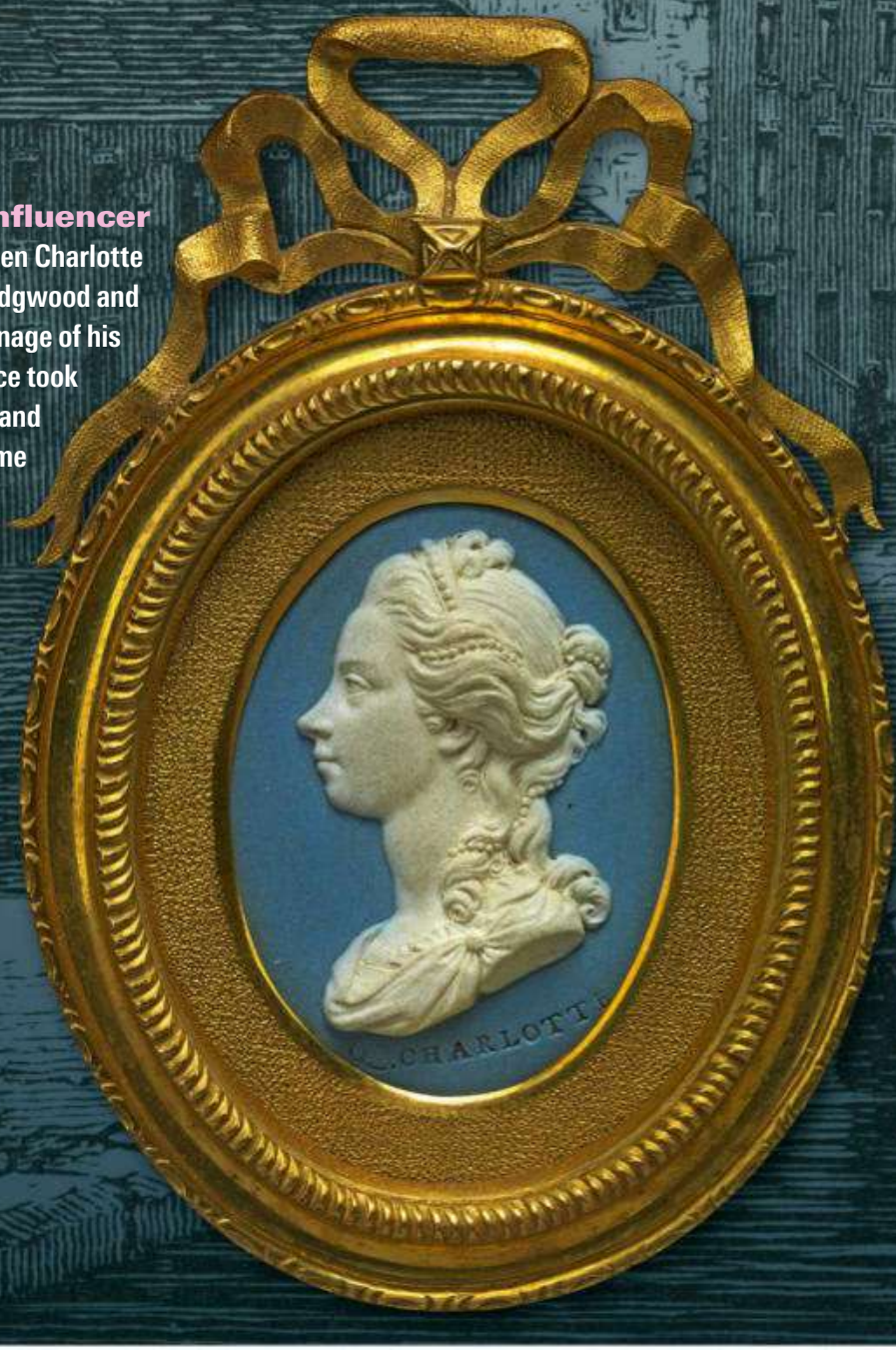


Ingenious inventor

A Black Basalt teapot, c1840–50. This was one of the materials Wedgwood pioneered through experiments in his basement laboratory

BRIDGEMAN

Enlightened thinker
A 1770 portrait of Matthew Boulton, who hosted the radical intellectuals and industrialists of the Lunar Society, including Wedgwood, at his home in Birmingham



Royal influencer
A portrait of Queen Charlotte produced by Wedgwood and Bentley. Her patronage of his tableware service took it to new heights, and Wedgwood became "Master Potter to Her Majesty"

temperatures earned him a fellowship of the Royal Society.

As such, he was an obvious fit for that radical circle of 18th-century provincial intellectuals, natural philosophers and industrialists called the Lunar Society, which met monthly at Matthew Boulton's Soho House in Birmingham to debate "the first hints of discoveries, the current observations, and the mutual collision of ideas". The latest advances in minerology, astronomy and medicine were all there to be interrogated by the likes of Joseph Priestley and James Watt alongside Boulton and Wedgwood. Here were the origins of the English Enlightenment – not taking place at Oxford or Cambridge, but among makers and doers, Nonconformists and entrepreneurs, in the Midlands.

The Lunar Society never discussed party politics but its members were, at heart, deeply sympathetic to dissent, liberalism and internationalism. In the words of Richard Edgeworth, they stood against the forces of "Toryism and love of gain". They hoped that the clarifying logic of science would not only reveal nature's secrets but also dispel the old corruption that kept in place church and king conservatism – the traditional 18th-century Tory belief in the privileged authority of the Church of England (which led to discrimination against dissenters) and support for the power of the monarchy rather than parliament.

Wedgwood's politics were born of radical patriotism: a deep love of his country alongside a fearful sense that the promise of Great Britain – liberty under the law, Protestantism and progress – was being undermined by ministerial greed and jobbery. Above all, Wedgwood was a democrat. He supported the renegade MP John Wilkes in his campaigns for parliamentary reform and extension of the franchise, producing a series of teapots championing "Wilkes and Liberty" as the rallying cry of a reformed polity.

Wedgwood also shared Wilkes' sympathy for the American colonists, then beginning their struggle for independence, as fellow patriots seeking to protect their Magna Carta rights. To support their cause, he secretly designed an intaglio depicting a coiled rattlesnake with its tail raised and jaws open, above which was embossed the legend "DON'T TREAD ON ME" – a motif of anti-British resistance originally conceived by Benjamin Franklin and widely adopted among the rebel troops of the Continental Army.

After America came France. When the Bastille was stormed in 1789, Wedgwood was similarly excited by the prospect of radical change there. "I know you will rejoice with me in the glorious revolution which has taken place in France," he wrote immediately to his great friend Erasmus Darwin. "The politicians tell me that as a manufacturer I shall be ruined if France has her liberty, but I am willing to take my chance in that respect." Very swiftly, Wedgwood stopped making his Jasper medallions of Queen Marie Antoinette and started modelling a new figure of "France embracing Liberty".

Evils of slavery

Wedgwood's most lasting contribution to 18th-century radicalism was his campaign against the transatlantic slave trade. Here stands an uncomfortable tension: for decades, the success of the Wedgwood & Bentley business had been intertwined with the riches derived from the Atlantic slave economy. Not only was the growing wealth of the Georgian consumer market buoyed by slavery's profits, but the sugar bowls and tea rituals that Wedgwood provisioned were directly linked to that exploitation.

Nonetheless, by the 1780s Wedgwood had become convinced of slavery's inherent evil by "what has come to my knowledge of the accumulated distress brought upon millions of our fellow creatures by this inhuman traffic". Elected onto the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, he used his profound gifts of design and marketing to create a medallion that became the defining symbol of anti-slavery activism. Composed of white Jasper with a black relief and mounted in gilt metal, it depicts an enslaved African man on half-bended knee raising up his shackled arms. On the edge of the tiny

BRIDGEMAN/AKG-IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

medallion is inscribed the challenge: "Am I Not a Man and a Brother?"

Produced and distributed at Wedgwood's own expense, it was known as the Emancipation Medallion or Badge. As Thomas Clarkson noted in his *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (1808): "Of the ladies, several wore them in bracelets, and others had them fitted up in an ornamental manner as pins for their hair. At length, the taste for wearing them became general; and thus fashion, which usually confines itself to worthless things, was seen for once in the honourable office of promoting the cause of justice, humanity, and freedom."

By visually displaying the extent of public support for the anti-slavery movement, aligning the cause of abolition with leading public figures, and reminding civil society of

Wedgwood created a medallion of an enslaved African that became the defining symbol of anti-slavery activism

the suffering endured by enslaved Africans, the medallion played a significant role in the campaign that led to the abolition of the slave trade to the British colonies in 1807.

This summer, the V&A Wedgwood Collection at Stoke-on-Trent began a project encouraging Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College students to design their own medallions as a way of reflecting upon the anti-racist challenge today. For these young people, Wedgwood's radicalism was as much of an inspiration as the elegance of his ceramics.

Since the 1790s, when Macartney first sailed to China, the beauty of Wedgwood's pottery has been a source of profound national pride for British art and design. There is now perhaps the opportunity for his radical patriotism and progressive internationalism to be a source of similar admiration. H

Tristram Hunt is the director of the V&A Museum. His most recent book is *The Radical Potter: Josiah Wedgwood and the Transformation of Britain* (Allen Lane, 2021). He'll be discussing Wedgwood on the HistoryExtra podcast

WATCH The second series of **Secrets of the Museum**, on BBC iPlayer, includes a segment on Wedgwood. *bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/m000f1xt/secrets-of-the-museum*

BBC TWO

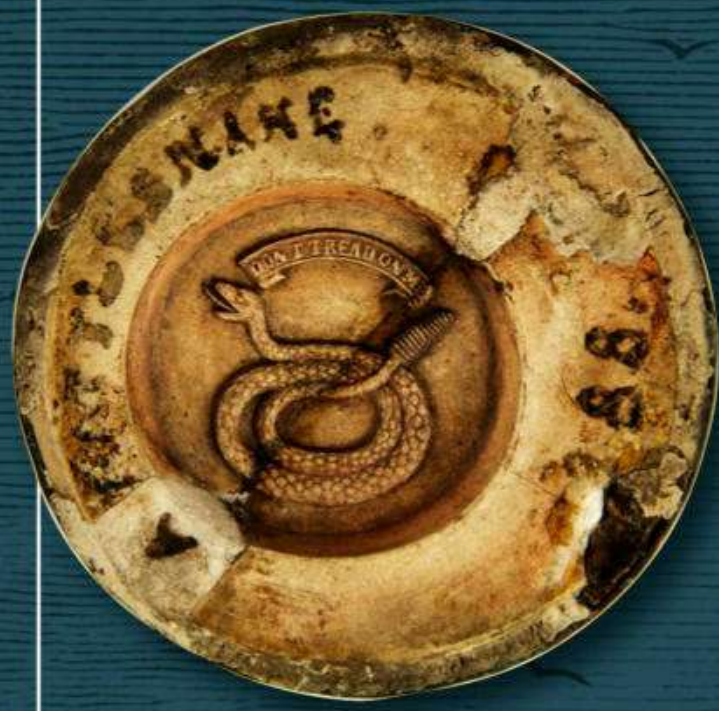
POLITICAL POTTERY

Tristram Hunt chooses five of Wedgwood's artworks that showcase his activism

Abolition's rallying cry

Emancipation Medallion
made 1777

Created by Wedgwood in 1777 and first appearing in the public catalogue 10 years later, this anti-slavery medallion embodies the global tensions, political awakenings and economic contradictions of Georgian Britain. Made from white Jasper with a black relief and mounted in gilt-metal, on its edge is inscribed the challenge: "Am I Not a Man and a Brother?" Wedgwood paid for the medallions' production and distribution out of his own pocket, to support the Society for the Abolition of Slavery. In the same way that Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament pins or Extinction Rebellion stickers signal a moral stance on the great questions of the day, Wedgwood's Jasper medallion became the most popular symbol of a public commitment to end the trade in enslaved Africans.



Stamp of support

Intaglio mould
made c1777

Wedgwood created this mould in support of the American colonists fighting for independence. When the mould was filled with wax, it would produce an intaglio – essentially a mirror image of the design carved in counter relief – which was primarily used to create a wax seal stamp. Based on a description in the *London Chronicle* of a Grand Union flag, it encompasses the rattlesnake image. "The Rattle Snake is in hand. I think it will be best to keep such unchristian articles for Private Trade," Wedgwood wrote conspiratorially to Bentley as he worked on the model at the height of the conflict.

Celebrating free trade

Plaque of Mercury uniting the hands of Britain and France

made 1787–90

Part of Wedgwood's radicalism found expression in his belief in free trade – for him, an emancipatory philosophy which would put an end to the corrupting influence of aristocratic rule and monopoly. He hoped the free exchange of goods would foster the higher moral development of individuals and friendship of nations. Wedgwood celebrated the 1786 Eden Agreement, which cut tariffs across the English Channel, with this Jasper plaque of "Mercury Uniting the Hands of Britain and France". A sprightly Mercury, god of commerce, binds together the cordial grasp of Britannia (whose shield is decorated with a Union motif) and Francia in a stylised moment of mutual accord. The 1786 free trade agreement led Wedgwood to place new sales agents in Paris, Rouen and Bordeaux.

A radical reformer

Decorated teapot

made c1774

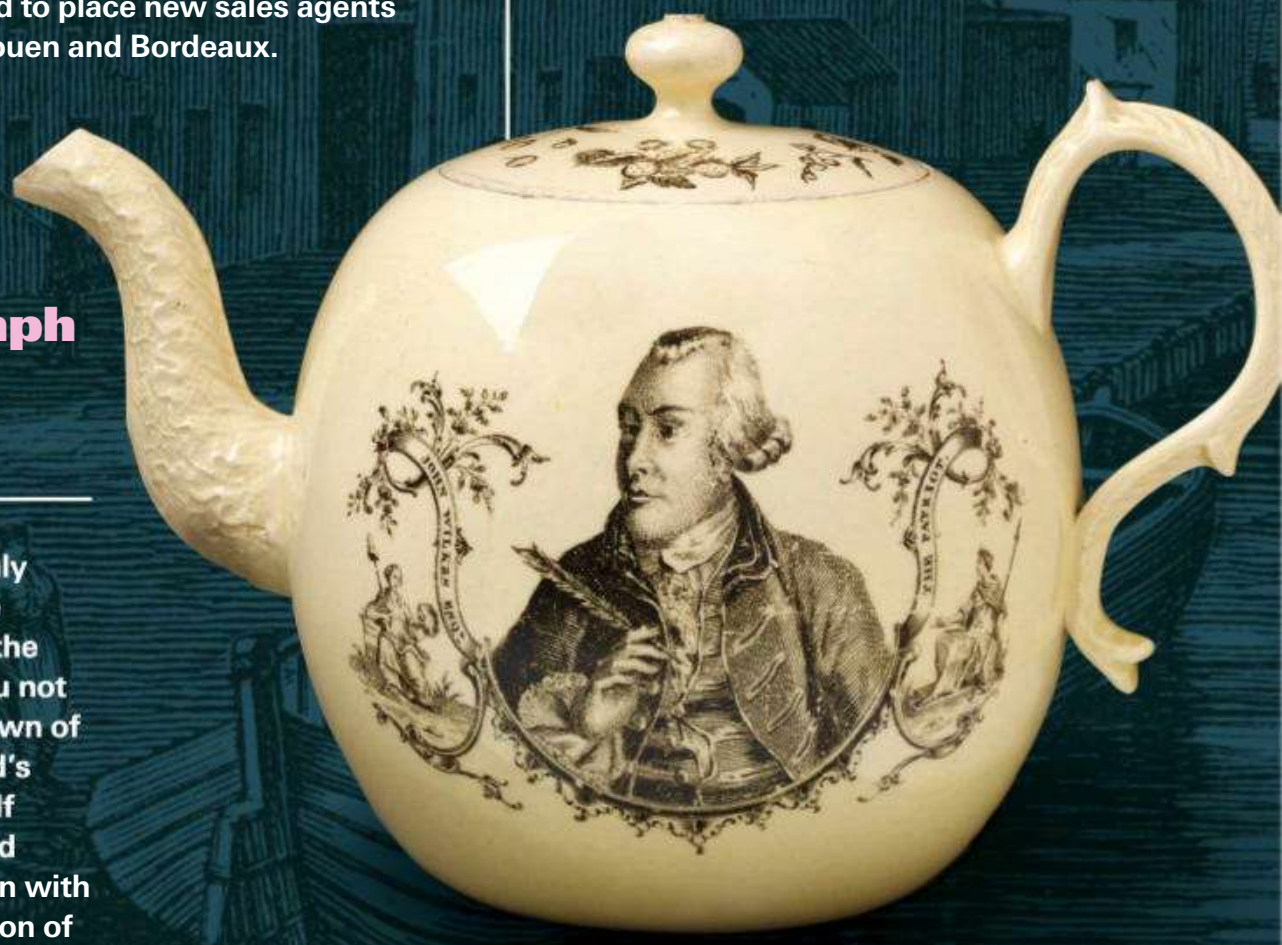
John Wilkes' high-profile political campaigns for parliamentary reform and democracy, and his public denunciations of bribery and corruption, made him a radical hero. There were Wilkite tobacco pipes and papers, candlesticks and candles, pewter pots and tankards, wigs, buttons and handkerchiefs embroidered with "Wilkes and Liberty". This 1774 earthenware teapot, decorated with a Sadler & Green print of "JOHN WILKES ESQ. THE PATRIOT" with the MP for Middlesex, quill in hand, accompanied by classical goddesses and the Union flag, was Wedgwood's contribution to that radical, democrat culture of which the "Master Potter to Her Majesty" was also proud to be part.

Revolutionary triumph

Storming of the Bastille medallion

made 1789

The storming of the Bastille on 14 July 1789 by Parisian citizens marked the beginning of open rebellion against the absolutist French monarchy. "Do you not congratulate your children on the dawn of universal liberty?" asked Wedgwood's friend Erasmus Darwin. "I feel myself becoming all French in chemistry and politics." This white Jasper medallion with dark blue dip and white ornamentation of the Bastille fortress in the centre is surmounted by the words "LE TRIOMPHE DE LA VALEUR FRANCOISE" and "1789". For Wedgwood, this was indeed the triumph of Enlightenment values.



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The picturesque Old Town of Dubrovnik

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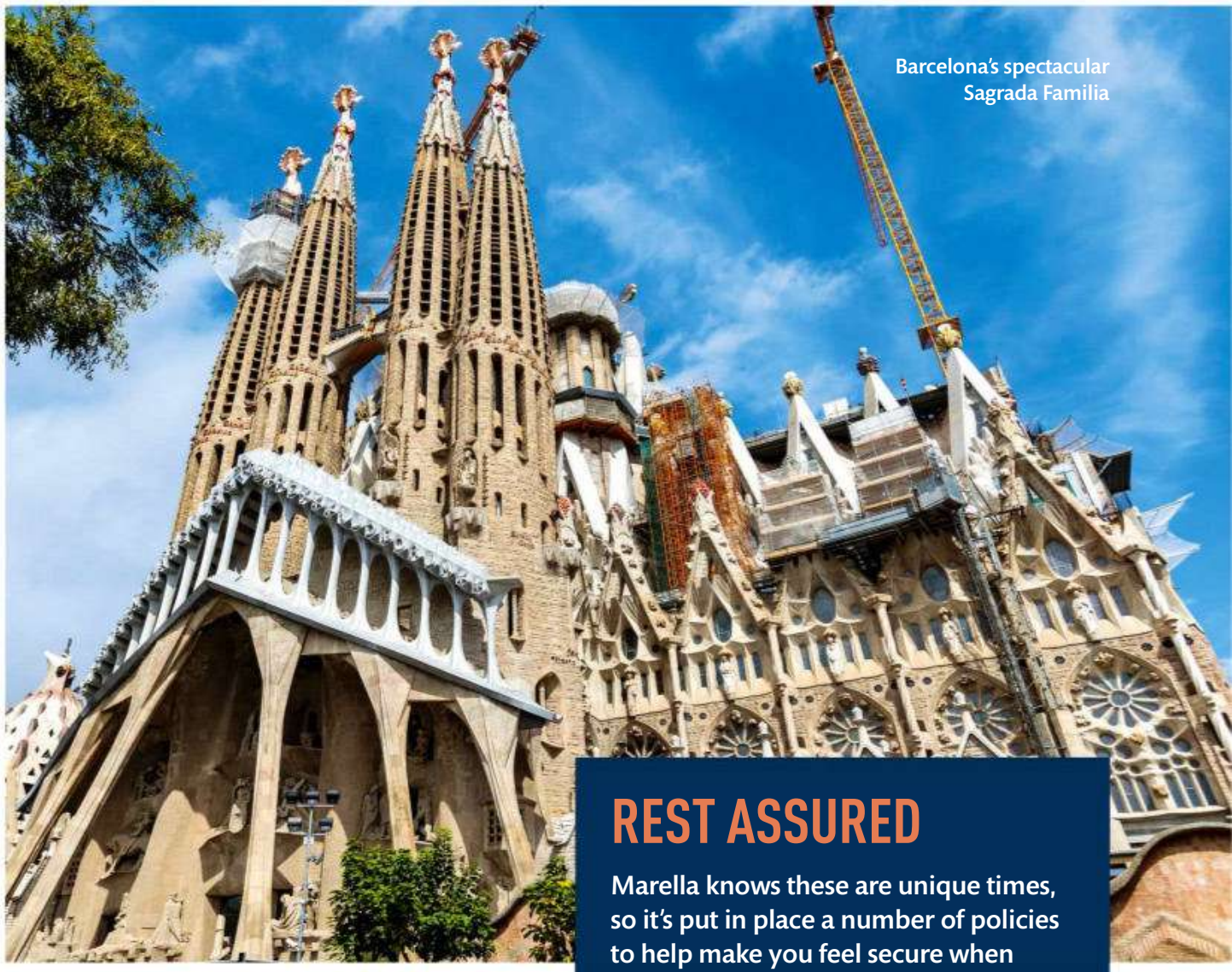

Barcelona's spectacular Sagrada Familia

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MARELLA CRUISES

The Kings and

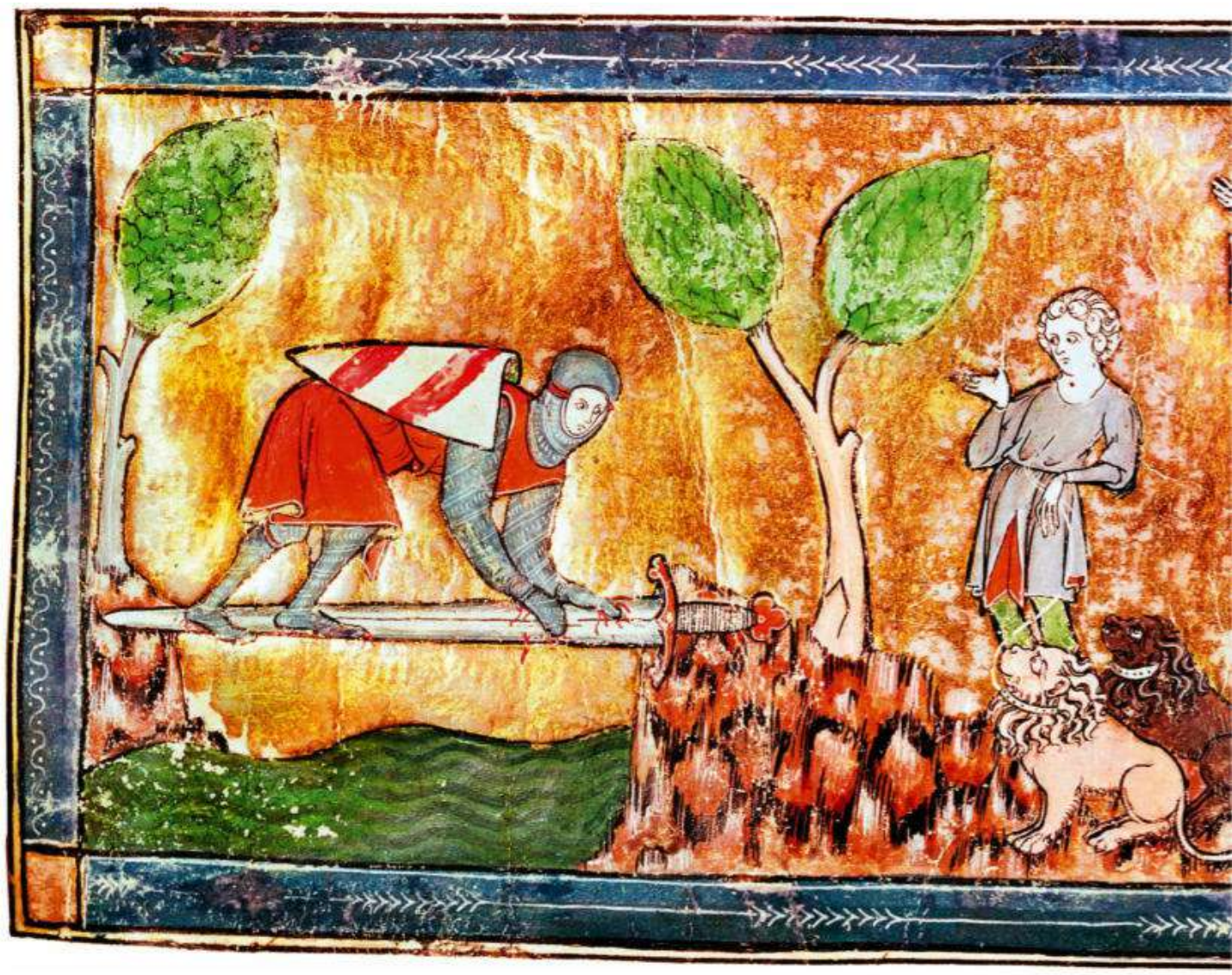
Playing the game
Elizabeth I; Mary Tudor, Henry VIII's sister; Henry VII; and Henry VIII (L–R) on playing cards. These Tudors each co-opted the tropes of courtly love for personal and political gain

AKG-IMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK/GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY/DREAMSTIME

Sarah Gristwood reveals how the Tudor monarchs exploited the medieval obsession with courtly love – a romantic creed inspired by the idea of valiant knights risking their lives to woo fair ladies – to further their own agendas

Queens of Hearts

ON THE HistoryExtra PODCAST



Lancelot is desperate to reach Guinevere's chamber – so desperate that he's crawled over a bridge made from a sword blade to rescue her. The French poet Chrétien de Troyes describes Lancelot's fingers shredded to the bone as he wrenches the bars from her window, but in her service he feels no pain…

When, in the latter part of the 12th century, Chrétien de Troyes wrote this powerful account in his poem *Lancelot*, he was giving voice to an ideal taken up by almost every other writer of the Arthurian stories, from Thomas Malory in the 1460s to Lerner and Loewe in the mid-20th century, when they wrote the musical *Camelot*.

But the idea of what a later age dubbed "courtly love" goes far beyond the Arthurian tales. This creed of love was heard in the songs of the troubadours and given formal shape in the courts of what we now call France. It began as a literary fantasy, centred around the image of service – a knight, or young noble lover, kneeling in devotion before a lady he may never even attain – which fascinated the aristocracy. Triggering a huge outpouring of poems, songs and novels, courtly love was described by medievalist and writer CS Lewis as a movement compared to which "the Renaissance [was] a mere ripple on the surface of literature".

Yet in reality, its tropes did not stay confined to the page. Indeed, the image of a man in service to his lover is a picture we still all recognise today. Take, for instance, the popular TV adverts "The lady loves Milk Tray", where a heroic man went to ludicrous lengths to bring his lover her desire: a box of chocolates. Enshrined in many of our traditional ceremonies and courtesies, its basic tenets have come to inform our whole idea of romance.

But we aren't the only society to be influenced by courtly love. Time and again, medieval monarchs made political capital from the fantasy. And certainly the ideas of chivalry, and of courtly love, were co-opted into the service of the Tudor dynasty. Henry VII used the Arthurian legends to bolster his fragile new dynasty; Henry VIII called on courtly tropes to woo Anne Boleyn. Their daughter Elizabeth found there a language to sanction her controversial female monarchy.

Adulterous passions

One of thorniest issues in the creed was whether courtly lovers should surrender to their passions. It had been at the court of Marie de Champagne, Eleanor of Aquitaine's daughter by Louis VII of France, that de Troyes had written of Lancelot and Guinevere, on the instruction, he said, of his patroness Marie. He did so in terms that saw their adulterous passion honoured for its ardour: this, at a time when church and state alike demanded the harshest penalties for real adultery. Yet de Troyes' Lancelot genuflects on leaving Guinevere's chamber, as if at a holy shrine.

Courtly love was a movement compared to which the Renaissance was "a mere ripple on the surface of literature"

That's amore A young couple discuss a poem in this illustration from 1305–15

It was probably also at Marie's court that one Andreas Capellanus (Andrew the Chaplain) wrote his *De Amore* (*On Love*), in which he laid down the rules for a spiritual, courtly passion: "You must maintain chastity for your lover," and "remember to avoid lying completely." Andreas's ideal relationship takes place between a young man and a woman already married to someone else, and of higher rank than he. As to whether the relationship was necessarily platonic… that one occupied theorists for centuries. At the end of the 13th century, in a different moral climate from that of Marie's court, the church condemned Capellanus's writings.

Andreas satirised the extremes to which this ideal of love could lead – and maybe even criticised it, too. Courtly suitors must obey their ladies' lightest command, but with women of the lower orders, Capellanus said, they should "not hesitate to embrace them by force… use a little compulsion as a convenient cure for their shyness".

He also described Marie and her mother Eleanor presiding over actual courts of love, adjudicating on such knotty points as whether true love within marriage was even possible. (Marie decided not, since true love was a matter of free choice, and marriage of

BRIDGEMAN/AKG-IMAGES

Romantic rogue Charles Brandon, one of Henry VIII's courtiers (shown c1516), secretly married the king's sister Mary in a love match

Love hurts This 1344 image depicts Lancelot crawling over a bridge made from a sword blade to prove his love for Guinevere before meeting her and the king in the right-hand side of the illustration. Their affair was held up as a shining example of courtly love, with a knight performing acts of service for his aristocratic, married lover

AKG-IMAGES/ALAMY

family arrangement.) Though generations of historians presented this fantastical picture as fact, few today would claim that actual courts of love existed in the 12th century.

Throughout the medieval period, the ideal of courtly love changed hue with the changing times. Different eras found either more, or less, value in the ideals of chivalry as a whole – and in the specific, potentially adulterous, fantasy of courtly love. But it never vanished entirely, thanks in part to courtly bestsellers like the *Roman de La Rose* (and to highly publicised debates like the one provoked by writer Christine de Pizan when she dared criticise that book, from what it's hard not to call a feminist standpoint). Dante, Petrarch and Chaucer all utilised the ideals of courtly love in different ways. And of course the endlessly reinvented Arthurian stories were brought centre stage when Thomas Malory's mighty *Morte d'Arthur* was printed by William Caxton in 1485 – the year that launched the Tudor dynasty.

Slaying the boar

Before the battle of Bosworth, Henry Tudor adopted as his standard the Red Dragon Dreadful, the dragon of Wales. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Malory's *Morte* also described how King Arthur dreamt of a fight where a dragon beat down a tyrant boar – the boar being the symbol of Richard III, Henry's great adversary. Enthroned but still vulnerable to Yorkist threat, Henry named his eldest son Arthur and ensured that he was born at Winchester, which Malory had identified as Camelot. Entertaining Philip of Burgundy, a star of the tournament (a sporting event newly fashionable again since the 15th century), he showed him the Round Table. But it was Henry VII's son who was besotted with the courtly side of the chivalric fantasy.

Henry VIII's court relished acting out the fantasy of love. Watched by his wife Catherine of Aragon, Henry rode in the lists under the name Sir Loyalheart, her *Coeur Loyal*. Perhaps courtly love had been co-opted into the service of wedded affection – "I love true where I did marry," Henry wrote. But the creed was still ill-equipped to cope with the realities of an ageing wife and years of failing to produce a surviving male heir.

There had always been a darker side to courtly fantasy. When in 1513 Henry went to fight in France, he took with him Charles Brandon, and there the Netherlands regent Margaret of Austria became embroiled with Charles in a scandalous story. It started with after-dinner courtly play: Brandon swearing to be Margaret's servant, and she to be his good mistress. But soon Brandon was showing off the ring he had snatched from Margaret, ignoring the discretion that was supposed to be a hallmark of the courtly lover. As a result, she reported horrified, the tale was being spread even by "merchant strangers" in the streets.

Less than three years later, Brandon made an unsanctioned marriage with Mary Tudor, Henry VIII's younger sister. She – educated like Henry in the old romantic stories – had extracted from her brother an extraordinary promise that if she furthered his policies by marrying the aged Louis XII of France, she might make a second marriage "as mine own heart and mind should be best pleased".

There was one important spectator of all these adventures: a young Anne Boleyn, sent in 1513 to serve Margaret of Austria, and then to France, to Mary Tudor's court. It was some seven years before Anne returned to England, but then her first recorded appearance was in another piece of love pageantry.

The "Siege of the Chateau Vert" in 1522 – the same year Henry had the Winchester Round Table revamped to reflect the Tudor story – saw knights representing the chivalric virtues attack a castle of ladies. The king's sister represented Beauty, and Anne Boleyn was Perseverance. At the tournament beforehand Henry had jousted under the device of "the heart of a man wounded" – prophetically, as it would turn out.

The letters Henry VIII wrote to Anne show him delightedly flexing his muscles as a courtly suitor. Though king, he writes to his "mistress… to acquit myself of the duty of a true servant", or declares that "my heart and I surrender ourselves into your hands". He asks whether he can truly call Anne his mistress since that "denotes a singular love, far

Love games Catherine of Aragon watches Henry VIII at a tournament staged in celebration of their son's birth. Jousting was strongly connected to courtly love, as a way for men to prove their ardour for their ladies (Henry jousted in Catherine's honour under the name "Sir Loyalheart")

removed from the common". As the years wore on, Henry's goal would change from making Anne his mistress (in either the courtly or the sexual sense) to making her his wife. But then, the patterns of courtly love would have another dangerous game to play.

It is still debatable what – after barely three years of marriage – really lay behind the downfall of Anne Boleyn. Was it the "pastime" – the music, dancing, poetry and flirtatious talk – in Anne's chamber, the ritual tribute of other men's admiration that might be paid to any courtly lady? Had she failed to understand the difference between fantasy and reality, the role of a mistress and of a wife? Or instead was it all a matter of court faction, and Henry's desperation for a son? (This would not be the first time the tropes of courtly love, or the charge of a woman's sexual incontinence, had been used to cloak hard political reality.) But the courtly ethic that actively suggested extramarital affairs was surely a weapon in Thomas Cromwell's hands, and it lent colour to the charges levelled against Anne.

As Anne speculated that she might be allowed to retire to a convent and recalled predictions that a queen of England would be burned, it is hard to believe that she did not remember stories of Guinevere, sentenced to the flames or to a nunnery. Henry's unusual decision that she should die by the sword may itself have been influenced by the fact the sword was a symbol of chivalry. Perhaps that's why courtly tropes don't feature so

When Henry finally made Anne Boleyn his wife, the patterns of courtly love had another dangerous game to play

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strongly in his subsequent marital history – although he did attempt to surprise Anne of Cleves in disguise at Rochester as part of a courtly game, but unfortunately it was one she had no training to play.

The courtly queen

Even Henry's daughter Mary I would show a flash of more generalised romanticism, telling her parliament she should not be asked to marry a man she did not care for, saying: "Where private persons… follow their own private tastes, sovereigns may reasonably challenge an equal liberty." Her marriage to Philip of Spain, though political, saw her "extraordinarily in love". But it was under Mary's half-sister, Elizabeth, that the fantasy of courtly love reached its apogee.

The universal assumption during Elizabeth's early reign was that she too had to marry. But when it became apparent that she was treading a more controversial single path, the challenge was to find an acceptable language, a coding, for her unmarried female monarchy. At almost every point the rules of courtly love matched the relationship between Elizabeth and her courtiers – explaining as nothing else has done how such extravagance could be accepted so readily.

The courtly lady was meant to be capricious and demanding, testing her lover's unquestioning devotion. Caprice and demand were Elizabeth's specialities. The theory made the homage paid by favourites like Leicester and Hatton, Ralegh and Essex

COLLEGE OF ARMS

Fond farewell Knights bid goodbye to their loved ones in this 15th-century manuscript illustration. While Henry VII had eschewed the romantic rituals of courtly love in favour of the Arthurian legends, his son and successor Henry VIII fervently embraced them and brought them to the English court

SHUTTERSTOCK/BRIDGEMAN

seem admirable, rather than absurd, and gave an acceptable gloss to Elizabeth's own flirtatious behaviour. The role reversal implicit in a creed that seemed to give power to the woman is echoed in the complex position of a reigning queen.

True, the original heroines of the courtly love story married – but then, Elizabeth would figure herself as married to her country, displaying the ring that symbolised the union. And if the courtly lady was supposed to be of higher rank, and thus able to dispense patronage, no one had more patronage at her disposal than the queen.

Even more significantly, the courtly lady was supposed to provide a superior moral example which, if her adorer learnt from it, would improve his knightly status. Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* was translated by Sir Thomas Hoby three years into Elizabeth's reign, urging that the courtly lady should be loved by the perfect courtier "and that she should love him in turn, so that both may attain absolute perfection". You could not get much higher, morally, than a woman who the ritual of the coronation had allied to God. In the courtly poetry of 14th-century Italy, Beatrice and Laura had acted as spiritual lodestars for Dante and Petrarch, and the role was ideal for a queen giving spiritual example to her country.

Though courtly ideals had little currency under Elizabeth's successor, James, the idea of the queen reigning over hearts never entirely died away. In 1865 Ruskin urged women to be "queens to your lovers; queens to your husbands and your sons; queens of higher mystery to the world beyond". If the Tudors both exploited and embodied this enduring ideal, that may be one reason we are still so fascinated by their story. H

Sarah Gristwood is the author of *The Tudors in Love: The Courtly Code Behind the Last Medieval Dynasty*, published by Oneworld on 23 September. She'll be discussing the book on the HistoryExtra podcast soon *historyextra.com/podcast*

WATCH Anne Boleyn's story is retold in **The Boleyns: A Scandalous Family**, now available on iPlayer. *bbc.co.uk/iplayer*

BBC TWO

THE VICTORIAN REVIVAL

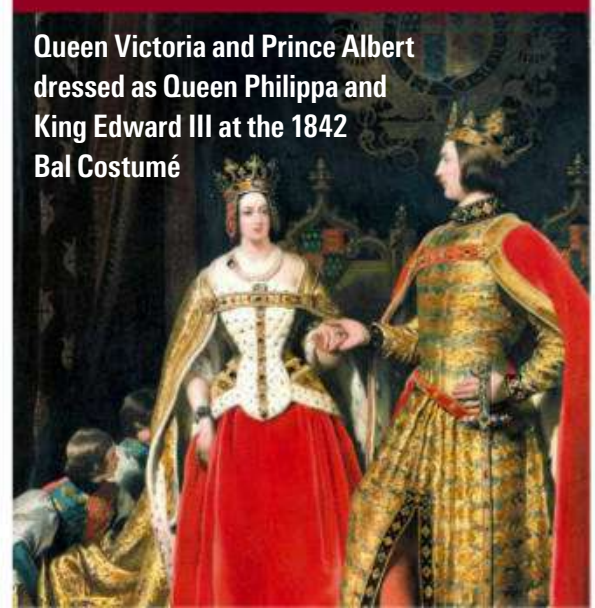
Courtly love enjoyed a later resurgence, impacting everything from Boy Scouts to the *Titanic*

Two centuries after jousting went out of fashion in Britain, the Eglinton tournament of 1839 once again saw knights in full armour thundering towards each other down the lists, hoping for a trophy that was to be awarded by the Queen of Beauty. The Victorian revival of chivalry had its roots in the Romantic rediscovery of all things medieval and the novels of Sir Walter Scott, and it was ultimately co-opted into the service of Victorian morality.

Victoria and Albert were painted as Queen Philippa and Edward III; Disraeli would later call Victoria "the Faery", in reference to Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. Baden-Powell urged his Boy Scouts to protect ladies, and a picture of Sir Galahad (preferred to Lancelot for his "purity") hung in the chapel at Eton. Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* pictured a repentant Guinevere prostrate at Arthur's feet.

By contrast, the pre-Raphaelites seized on the Arthurian love triangle as a reflection of their own tangled love affairs. So too did the clever upper-class coterie known as the Souls. When Wilfred Scawen Blunt went to visit Lady Windsor, both dressed in white, they walked around a medieval castle discussing Lancelot and Guinevere.

The ideal of chivalry would be there, too, when men made way for women and children on the decks of the *Titanic*. And, poignantly, a soldier-knight kneeling before a lovely angel would be among the propaganda postcards produced for the First World War.



Queen Victoria and Prince Albert dressed as Queen Philippa and King Edward III at the 1842 Bal Costumé

Q&A

A selection of historical **conundrums** answered by experts

What fertility aids existed in the medieval era?

John of Gaddesden, a physician who compiled a book of medicines in the early 14th century, suggested many ways to improve fertility and treat fertility problems. Some were plant-based medicines made from ingredients such as mandrake, mugwort and catnip. Other medicines were made from animals' reproductive organs, because it was thought these could stimulate a person's reproductive system.

For example John recommended a hare's womb, dried and powdered: the woman could drink it in wine before taking a bath, or the man and woman could eat the powder. John also listed tests to show whether the man or woman in a couple was infertile. Each person's urine should be put into a pot with grains of wheat and left for a week. If the grains in one pot didn't sprout, then, he said, that person was infertile.

Finally John gave advice on sexual techniques, because medieval physicians believed that women were more likely to conceive if they, as well as their partners, enjoyed sex.

All these tests and treatments were accepted parts of medicine, backed by theories about how the body worked.

However, as well as turning to physicians, medieval people also prayed and made pilgrimages to saints' shrines. The shrine of St Thomas Cantilupe in Hereford recorded that in 1296 St Thomas helped an infertile woman conceive twins. Nonetheless there was no guarantee these fertility aids would work: John of Gaddesden also warned his readers that curing infertility was sometimes "very difficult and rare".

Catherine Rider, associate professor in medieval history at the University of Exeter

A man holds a woman in this 15th-century miniature. In the Middle Ages, people turned to both medicine and God in attempts to improve fertility

Children gather around a TV screen in this 1956 image. The following year the "Toddlers' Truce" ended, after lobbying from ITV

When was the Toddlers' Truce?

During the years following the Second World War, the BBC ceased television transmission for an hour on weekday evenings. The thinking was that, with nothing to watch on telly, young children would be easier to chivvy into bed, while older ones would be more inclined to start their homework.

When commercial TV started in 1955, the ITV franchises, funded by advertising, wanted to broadcast during this lucrative 6pm–7pm slot and lobbied for an end to the "Toddlers' Truce". But the BBC wanted to keep it – an extra hour's programming would stretch its budgets.

Broadcasting policy was the domain of Postmaster-General Charles Hill, who considered the "truce" patronising, and he wasn't alone. A *Daily Mirror* editorial said that: "If parents can't drag their children away from the TV screen there is something wrong with the parents, not with the TV programme."

The "truce" ended in 1957, and the slot was generally occupied by national and local news programmes – which were only slightly more interesting to kiddies than a blank screen.

Eugene Byrne, author and journalist specialising in history

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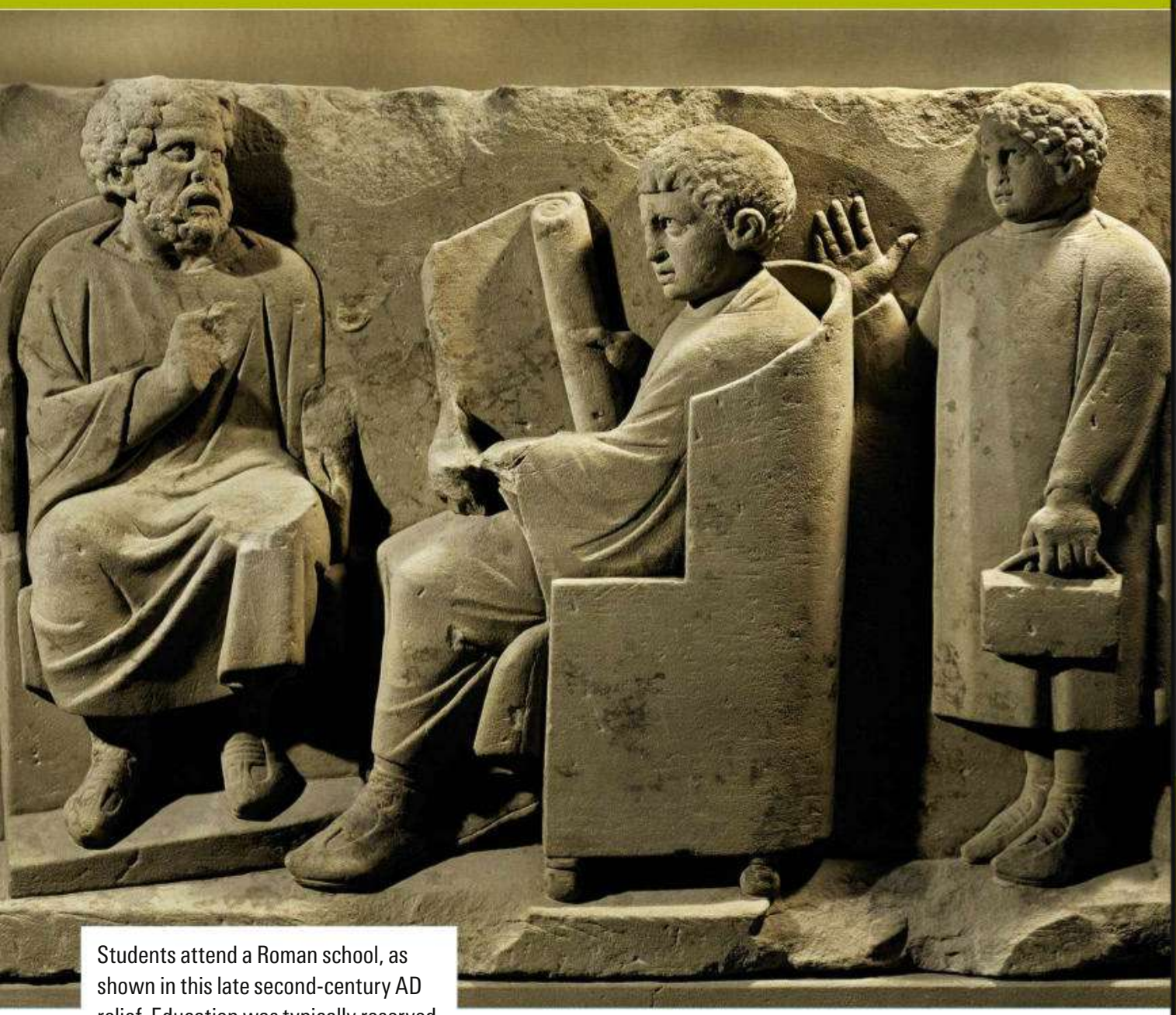

Students attend a Roman school, as shown in this late second-century AD relief. Education was typically reserved for the elites

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What were schools like in ancient Rome?

Our "school" drives from ancient Greek *skholê*, "leisure"; the Latin for "school" is *ludus*, "game". That is no coincidence. Since about 80 per cent of Romans survived by cultivating their small patch of land, hoping to make a surplus to buy what they could not grow, education was of interest only to people of leisure, ie the wealthy.

Their aim was to make their way up the greasy pole to power. They did that by winning arguments in the political, military and legal arenas. Education – essentially job-training – was designed to that end. The elite were trained in the home (so too were girls, mainly to read and write). Otherwise, those who could afford it went to a school under a single, usually pretty unforgiving, results-driven private tutor (physical punishment was commonplace).

The training centred on the correct use of language. Accurate reading, writing and pronunciation of Greek as well as Latin were drummed in from ages 6 to 9. From 9 to 12, higher literary skills were developed, especially close grammatical and linguistic analysis of poetry; and from 12 to 17 the emphasis turned to rhetoric, the capacity to persuade by argument. Here mythical and historical examples came to the fore: should Agamemnon sacrifice his daughter to appease the gods? Should Hannibal have marched on Rome? In the process, moral and philosophical judgment was honed.

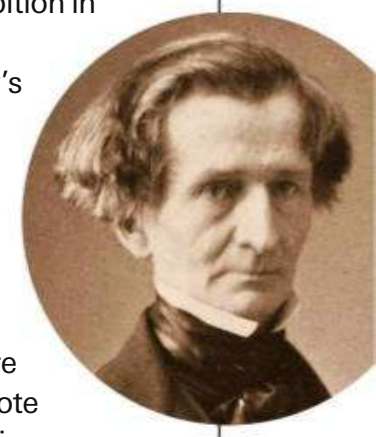
And for the really able, a year of advanced education in Greece, home of all things intellectual and artistic, added the clinching flourish. Then into the hurly-burly of political and military life and, they hoped, glory.

Peter Jones, co-founder of the charity Classics for All (*classicsforall.org.uk*)

DID YOU KNOW...?

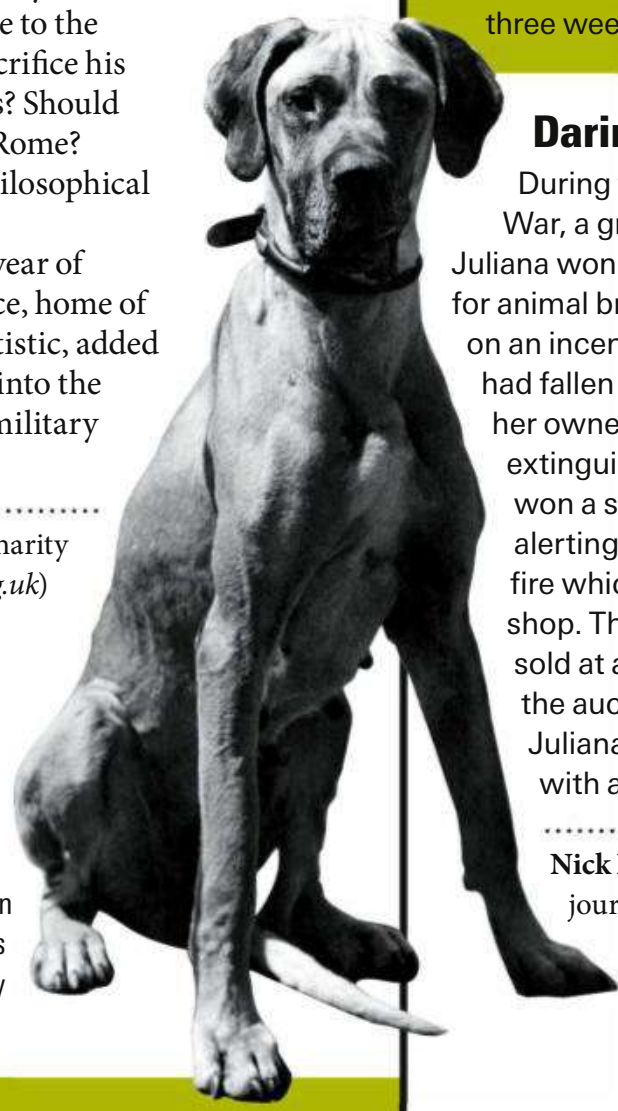
Morose musician

The French composer Hector Berlioz (pictured), creator of the *Symphonie Fantastique*, spent the summer of 1851 at the Great Exhibition in London's Hyde Park, working as his country's representative on an international commission examining new musical instruments. It was not a task he found congenial. "No one can imagine a more dreadful chore," he wrote to his sister. "My head is bursting," he went on, "with the sounds of hundreds of wretched contraptions, each more out of tune than the rest."



Cheese executive

In 1802, American president Thomas Jefferson was presented with a huge cheese, weighing 1,235lbs (560kg) and inscribed with the words "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God". The gift was the idea of John Leland, a Baptist minister in the Massachusetts town of Cheshire, who encouraged his congregation to donate the milk of 900 cows to produce it. It was carried by sled, barge, ship and wagon to the White House in a 500-mile journey that took three weeks.



Juliana the great dane in 1941. She won two medals for her bravery

Daring dog

During the Second World War, a great dane named Juliana won a Blue Cross medal for animal bravery after urinating on an incendiary bomb which had fallen through the roof of her owner's house. The fire was extinguished. The dog later won a second medal for alerting her owner to another fire which had ignited in his shop. This second medal was sold at auction in 2013, when the auctioneer described Juliana as "a great dane with a great bladder". H

Nick Rennison, writer and journalist specialising in history

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Twenty years ago, two planes were flown into the Twin Towers in New York, prompting worldwide horror and defining the American political agenda for the rest of the decade. But, asks **David Reynolds**, were **the events of 9/11** really a turning point in global history?

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A plane crashes into the South Tower of the World Trade Center. The events of 11 September 2001 "forced a whole nation to reconsider its raison d'être", writes David Reynolds

Complements the BBC One documentary **9/11: Inside the President's War Room**

BBC one

George W Bush is informed of the attacks on the World Trade Center. For David Reynolds, this is the most memorable image of 9/11

Most people over the age of 30 probably have some vivid mental image of 11 September 2001, when fanatical Islamic terrorists crashed two planes into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and another into the Pentagon in Washington DC. A fourth hijacked plane was forced down by courageous passengers en route to either the Capitol or the White House. For me, the most memorable image (shown right) is of US president George W Bush sitting with a class of schoolkids, aged six and seven, in Florida, listening while they read *My Pet Goat*. Bush's face is frozen at the moment when an aide whispers in his ear that the second plane had crashed into the other tower: "Mr President, America is under attack."

The president's shocked visage testifies to a man who suddenly knew that the buck did indeed "stop here". It also personifies a whole nation suddenly forced to rethink its raison d'être. Twenty years on, Americans remain scarred by 9/11. And it undoubtedly transformed air travel and security. But was 9/11 a turning point in world history, as has often been argued? Is a dramatic image always a good guide to lasting impact?

To grasp the immediate shock of 9/11, let's rewind to those heady days a decade before, when the Soviet empire in eastern Europe collapsed in 1989 and then the USSR itself fell apart in December 1991. Pundit Francis Fukuyama summed up the American mood extravagantly: we had, he argued, reached "the end of history", meaning that we had reached what he regarded as the end point of humanity's ideological evolution, and the universalisation of western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.

Another slogan of the time came from commentator Charles Krauthammer. Cold War bipolarity had gone, he said. "Now is the unipolar moment… The centre of the world is the unchallenged superpower, the United States, attended by its western allies." In time, he admitted, "in perhaps another generation or so there will be great powers coequal with the United States", but "we are not there yet, nor will we be for decades".

A third catchphrase – "a new world order" – was uttered by President George HW Bush during his triumphant campaign to drive Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait in February 1991. Bush crafted a remarkable diplomatic coalition of nearly 40 countries – including old foes such as Moscow and prickly allies such as France – all acting under UN authority. Ground combat operations lasted only a hundred hours, after a display of GPS-directed "technowar" that showed why the US was indeed the top military superpower. Yet Bush was careful not to stretch his unlikely coalition too far, resisting calls to push on from Kuwait further into Iraq and topple Saddam. Instead, reusing a phrase coined by former US president Woodrow Wilson, he declared: "We have before us the opportunity to forge for ourselves and for future generations a new world order – a world where the rule of law, not the law of the jungle, governs the conduct of nations."

Yet the 1990s belied these high hopes. A decade of brutal fighting across former Yugoslavia, during which perhaps 140,000 people were killed and 4 million displaced, showed that the new world order would not fall smoothly into place. Spasms of ethnic cleansing on all sides spiralled into crimes of genocide by Serbian forces in Bosnia. As for the sole superpower, Bush's Democrat successor, Bill Clinton, learnt the limits of American might when his "surgical operation" to clean up warlord-run Somalia in October 1993 ended with the desecrated corpses of US soldiers being dragged through the streets of the capital Mogadishu, to the horror of TV viewers across the US. Clinton's rapid withdrawal of American forces encouraged Islamist militants to see the US as a hollow giant. Among them was a man called Osama Bin Laden.

It was therefore a wary America that entered the new millennium under George W Bush, the son of Clinton's predecessor. "Dubya", as he was known in the family, seemed out of his depth in the early months after his inauguration in January 2001. His main foreign policy focus was relations with China, and he showed no enthusiasm for military intervention or for "nation building". Before the election, Bush had said he felt America needed to "convince people who live in the lands they live in to build the nations". He also promised to be "judicious as to how to use the military. It needs to be in our vital interest, the mission needs to be clear... the exit strategy obvious."

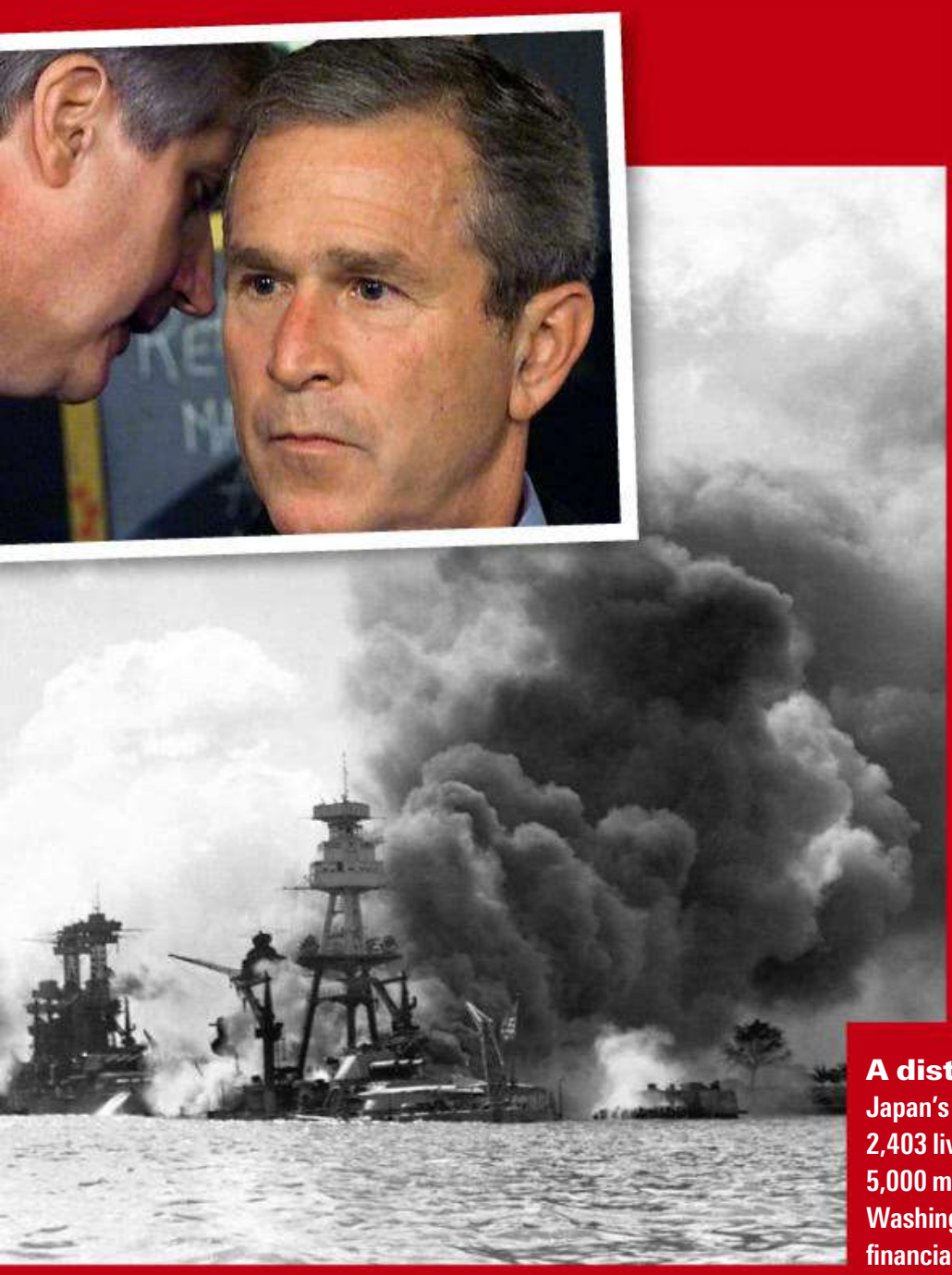
Of course, nothing could have prepared any president for Tuesday, 11 September 2001. The nearest equivalent was Japan's attack on the US fleet at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on 7 December 1941, when 2,403 people were killed. But that took place 5,000 miles from New York and Washington DC, and the ensuing war from 1941 to 1945 left the continental United States itself virtually unscarred, where only one woman and five children died from enemy action.

The nearest equivalent to 9/11 was Japan's surprise attack on the US fleet at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii in 1941

In 2001, by contrast, Bush was facing an assault of unknown dimensions on the nerve centres of America's finance and government, mounted not by a military taskforce but a motley assortment of 19 hijackers who had turned four commercial airliners into guided missiles. The official death toll was 2,996.

The new president struggled to find his touch. But a visit to the smoking ruins of Manhattan's Twin Towers on the Friday left an indelible impression. The destruction was far worse than Bush had imagined or seen on TV, and he was also struck by the thirst for revenge among the crowd of rescue workers, who kept chanting "U-S-A, U-S-A, U-S-A". It was, said Bush, like being in "some ancient arena".

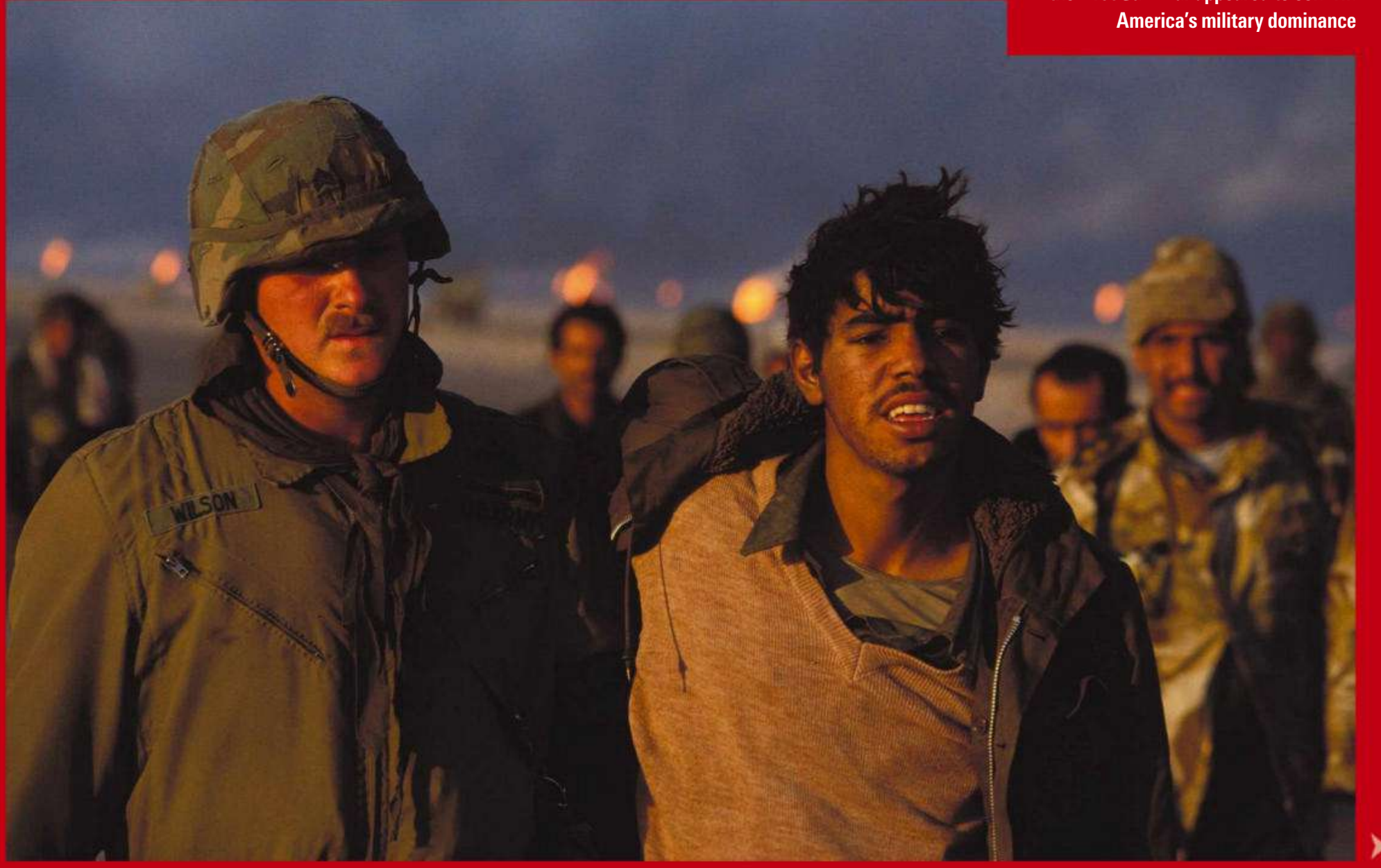
It soon became clear that the attacks had



A distant disaster
Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor cost 2,403 lives, yet, unlike 9/11, it was 5,000 miles from New York and Washington DC, the heart of US financial and political power

Painful lessons
Refugees are evacuated from Sarajevo, 1992. A brutal conflict in the former Yugoslavia gave the lie to claims that the world was entering some kind of liberal-democratic utopia

Sole superpower
An American soldier with an Iraqi prisoner in the Kuwait desert, February 1991. The US-led coalition's triumph in the First Gulf War appeared to confirm America's military dominance



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Tough love
Tens of thousands of people took part in an antiwar march in London, February 2003. Despite huge protests across the globe, George Bush – supported by Tony Blair – ploughed on with his plans to invade Iraq

Free-for-all
Looting on the streets of Basra, April 2003. With Iraq spiralling into chaos following the US-led invasion, neocons' predictions that the nation would soon be a beacon of peace and democracy in the Middle East looked horribly naive

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been conducted by al-Qaeda – a collection of radical Islamic fundamentalist cells headed by Osama bin Laden. It was also apparent that al-Qaeda was being sheltered by the fundamentalist Taliban regime in Afghanistan, ironically rooted in freedom fighters backed by the US in the 1980s against the country's Soviet client government. On 20 September, Bush addressed a Joint Session of Congress. "Our war on terror begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end there," he said. "It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated."

The phrase "war on terror" was deliberately open-ended. A war, not merely a campaign, and waged not against specific terrorist groups but against terror itself, because this threatened everything that America stood for. "They hate our freedoms – our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other," Bush declared, also insisting that "this is the world's fight. This is civilisation's fight." The purveyors of terror, he declared, "follow in the path of fascism and Nazism and totalitarianism".

Not only had Bush found his voice; America had found a new enemy, a new existential threat against which to redefine itself after the demise of the Soviet "Evil Empire".

America had found a new existential threat against which to define itself after the demise of the Soviet "evil empire"

Yet passion has its perils in politics and in diplomacy. Bush's "war on terror" dominated the rest of his two-term presidency, with costly and inconclusive campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. These also diverted his successors, Barack Obama (2009–17) and Donald Trump (2017–21). Meanwhile, the dynamics of the post-Cold War world were changing, and America was slow to react.

At first Afghanistan seemed straightforward. This was a campaign to get Bin Laden. The Taliban would not give him up. So they had to be overthrown, and that was duly done by the end of 2001. But the US soon discovered the lesson that many outsiders had painfully learnt before (not least Britain and Russia in the 19th century) – that stabilising Afghanistan was an almost impossible task. The client governments established by Washington lacked roots and credibility, and the Taliban regrouped as a skilful, brutal insurgency – mounting guerrilla raids, mass shootings and suicide bombings that wrested control of large areas from the Americans and their Nato allies.

Obama finally gained the prize that had eluded Bush: the death, in May 2011, of Osama bin Laden, tracked down to a secret compound in Pakistan. But neither that, nor a huge troop surge during 2009–11, ended the fighting in Afghanistan.

The killing of Osama bin Laden (left) in May 2011 gave Barack Obama a much-needed PR victory but blood continued to be spilled across Afghanistan

As Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon had done in Vietnam, Obama and Trump tried to extricate the US from the quagmire while saving face. By the end of 2018, Trump's negotiators were talking to the Taliban, and on 13 April 2021 his successor, Joe Biden, announced that remaining US troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by 11 September 2021 – the 20th anniversary of 9/11. In fact, the troops were out by early July, and the Taliban were soon regaining their grip on the country.

Iraq was even more tragic. Prime movers in the story were the neoconservatives, disenchanted by the failure of the elder Bush to finish off Saddam in 1991. The Iraqi dictator had used chemical weapons on Iran and on his own people; it was also widely believed that he was working to develop nuclear weapons. So, after 9/11, the neocons seized their chance. Diplomat Paul Wolfowitz caught the president's ear with his assertion that Iraq must have been behind the attacks. There were also calls to democratise the whole Middle East on American lines. Another neocon, Richard Perle, claimed that there existed "a potential civic culture in Arab countries that can lead to democratic institutions, and I think Iraq is probably the best place to put that proposition to the test because it's a sophisticated, educated population that has suffered horribly under totalitarian rule".

To bolster the administration's case, leading politicians simplified and exaggerated fragmentary and ambiguous evidence about Iraqi arms programmes. "Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction," Vice-President Dick Cheney told veterans in August 2002. "There is no doubt he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies, and against us." Cheney scoffed away fears that the US was going to get mired in Iraq as it had Vietnam: "It'll be like the American army going through the streets of Paris [in 1944]… The people will be so happy with their freedoms that we'll probably back ourselves out of there within a month or so."

Secretary of State Colin Powell did manage to persuade Bush to work through the United Nations. But although Powell slowed the rush to war, he could not stop it. Finally losing patience with the UN, the United States invaded Iraq on 20 March 2003. Britain's support, pledged by Prime Minister Tony Blair, was useful militarily and diplomatically, providing a fig-leaf for naked American power. Baghdad fell in less than three weeks and, on 1 May, Bush landed dramatically on the deck of the aircraft carrier *Abraham Lincoln* (off the California coast) to declare: "Major combat operations in Iraq have ended." He thanked the US armed forces: "Because of you, the tyrant has fallen, and Iraq is free." Behind the president a large banner proclaimed "Mission Accomplished".

This PR stunt proved one of the biggest gaffes of the Bush presidency. Up to that date, 139 Americans had died in Iraq; by the end of 2006, the US death toll of 3,000 exceeded that of 9/11. Because postwar planning had been neglected, the fall of Saddam's regime created a power vacuum filled by warring insurgent groups the US could

Attack mode
US paratroopers board a Chinook helicopter en route to a mission against Taliban insurgents, Kandahar, July 2007. America's "war on terror" in Afghanistan began in 2001. When the US withdrew 20 years later without decisive victory, this opened Afghanistan anew to the Taliban

Striking back
Kurdish soldiers pose with a captured Isis flag at the Mosul dam, August 2014. Despite such victories, Isis visited genocidal terror on swathes of Iraq and Syria from 2014

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not control. Without police and security services, the country slid into anarchy. As images of looting filled TV screens, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld blustered: "Stuff happens. It is untidy, and freedom's untidy, and free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things. They're also free to live their lives and do wonderful things. And that's what's going to happen here."

It didn't. "Stuff" continued to happen, no weapons of mass destruction were found, and Americans became disenchanted with a war apparently foisted on them by the neo-conmen. Obama eventually managed to pull out the last US troops in December 2011, but sent them back in 2014 because, amid continuing anarchy in Iraq, control was shifting towards the Islamic State – a fundamentalist offshoot of al-Qaeda using genocidal terror to wage a "holy war" against the west. This renewed struggle in Iraq merged with the brutal civil war in Syria and the chaos across the whole Middle East after the 2011 "Arab Spring" had turned sour. It took until 2017 to drive Islamic State out of the terrain it once controlled in Iraq, but insurgent operations have continued and the Iraqi government remains reliant on US and Nato forces. In 2021, a full American troop withdrawal from Iraq, unlike Afghanistan, is still not in sight.

While the US has spent two decades wrestling with the legacies of 9/11, the world has not stood still

Afghanistan and Iraq consumed the administration of George W Bush, and preoccupied both his successors. Yet, while the US spent two decades wrestling with the legacies of 9/11, the world did not stand still. During that time, 1990s talk about unipolarity sounded increasingly hollow. One reason was renewed friction with with the Kremlin in the 2010s. But Russia posed only a limited economic and military challenge to America. The big issue was China.

China's exit from the Cold War in 1989 developed very differently from that of the USSR. Mikhail Gorbachev had neither the desire nor the capacity to hold the Soviet empire together by force. In the People's Republic of China (PRC), however, communist leaders stamped brutally on pro-democracy protestors in Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989. In further contrast to Gorbachev, the PRC ensured that the process of economic liberalisation was gradual and also firmly under state control. In any case, China was a more populous country than Russia, with a strong entrepreneurial tradition. For all these reasons, its managed transition from Maoist communism posed a far greater challenge to Washington.

George W Bush had recognised this in the early months of his presidency, but 9/11 transformed his priorities. A decade later, Obama briefly tried to grasp the China nettle. In November 2011, with Afghanistan and Iraq both apparently winding down, he announced that his administration was going to focus on Asia and the Pacific because America was "and always will be, a Pacific nation" and because the Asia-Pacific was "the world's fastest growing region, and home to more than half the global economy".

But Obama's "pivot to the Pacific" was short-lived, thanks to Putin and the deadly legacies of the Arab Spring. Donald Trump did engage more directly with China, but his policy veered between confrontational rhetoric and frantic efforts to secure a showcase trade deal. By this time Xi Jinping – China's ruler since 2012 – had made himself leader for life. Xi's ruthless grip over the PRC stood in stark contrast to the polarised society and fractured politics that faced Joe Biden when he succeeded Trump in January 2021. Xi, like Putin, is determined to challenge American "unipolarity" in order to create a "post-west world order". Biden sees China as the pre-eminent test for his foreign policy.

So how will 9/11 be regarded at the 50th anniversary in 2051? Will it be seen as having led America, fatally, to ignore the resurgence of China? Or as exacerbating the toxic cocktail of the Middle East, with its unresolved problems going back to the fall of the Ottoman empire in 1918? Perhaps, by 2051, 9/11 will seem far less important than Covid 19 – the onset of an era of zoonotic diseases, passing from animals to humans, which affected daily life across the world much more profoundly? Or maybe, by mid-century, the climate emergency will dwarf all other issues, and our grandchildren will point to a crucial tipping point in climate change that this generation failed to address. I'd put my money on climate, not Covid or China, but I don't expect to be around to find out!

The challenge of doing contemporary history is that perspectives are bound to change over time – and that dramatic events, captured on global TV and social media, are not always the most significant in the long run. Of one thing we can be certain: to borrow that immortal phrase from Donald Rumsfeld, "stuff" will keep happening. And a historical perspective on events is absolutely vital. H

Donald Trump with Chinese president, Xi Jinping, in Florida, 2017. With America distracted by conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, China emerged as a significant threat to the west's pre-eminence

David Reynolds is emeritus professor of international history at Cambridge University. His books include *America: Empire of Liberty* (updated edition, Basic Books, 2021)

WATCH **9/11: Inside the President's War Room** – featuring exclusive interviews with key decision-makers – is due to air on BBC One in September

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY **ELEANOR SHAKESPEARE**

What's the future of studying the past?

ON THE HistoryExtra PODCAST

The teaching of history at universities is facing huge challenges: courses are being cut, debates rage about decolonising curricula, and the Covid-19 crisis is only adding to the pressure. Historians **Sophie Ambler**, **Richard Partington**, **Jason Todd** and **Anna Whitelock** discuss the big issues confronting the academic discipline of history

INTERVIEW BY **RHIANNON DAVIES**

Rhiannon Davies Competition between institutions and courses is increasingly fierce, with funding cuts adding to the pressures. So why should people study history at university?

Anna Whitelock I think it's a really important question, and a challenging one. The number of applications for degrees in history and history-related subjects has fallen in recent years. But, in my opinion, the need for history and to study it is perhaps greater than ever. History is, of course, about looking backwards and gaining knowledge and understanding, but it's also a lens through which to engage with the present. In that sense, it's critical – it's not simply about being stuck in the past and in the archive.

Sophie Ambler Studying history at university can also teach us empathy – the ability to put ourselves in the shoes, through our sources, of somebody who might have lived on the far side of the world or down our street 100 or 1,000 years ago, and understand what forces shaped their world or how they sought to shape it. And that can sometimes be a very uncomfortable experience – it can sometimes be very challenging – but it's what we do as historians.

In a world of increasingly polarised debate, the ability to empathise with people who might have a very different situation and world view to us is one of the other reasons why history is so crucial now.

Richard Partington In terms of transferable skills, the value of history remains immensely high. But I also think about history from a leisure perspective: it's one of the ways people escape from the pressures and worries of life. And it's very important that we remind everyone, I think, that learning to do something that will help you in your private life as well as your professional and public life is really important.

Jason Todd I agree: it's enormous fun. And, from a career perspective, a history degree can set you up well. History's got this ability to adapt to a range of different professions, and I think that's really important given the prevailing idea that STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics] is the only field where you can have a lucrative and productive career. In fact, evidence suggests that history can lead to great careers. It might be a slower burn but, ultimately, postgraduate historians can earn as much as anybody else might in particular professions.

AW I also think it's really important to acknowledge that history yields creative content. Historical research makes its way into television programmes and radio programmes, and into audio guides at heritage sites. Increasingly, and really excitingly, it's also used in online historical computer games, which is a huge growth area – more and more gamers are wanting to explore authentic historical worlds. It's kind of amazing how these sorts of careers are spawned by history.

There's a quote that I really love from Steve Jobs, who said: "It is in Apple's DNA that technology alone is not enough – it's technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities, that yields us the results that make our heart sing." In other words, it's the humanities that give soul to something – and increasingly that's being appreciated in the high-tech sector and in the AI sector. There, the big challenges for the future are: what can machines *not* do that humans can?

That knowledge, that understanding and that empathy is absolutely critical. In a sense, historians are the custodians of humanity, and it's really important that we feed into the new directions of modern technology, design and the workplace. So as much as it's about the past, it's really critical for the future.

SA It's also worth pointing out how good history is, and historically has been, as a preparation for leadership in the UK and the rest of the world. We're in an age now where the president of the United States is a history graduate. If you look at the number of MPs and cabinet ministers in the UK who have history degrees or classics degrees – including our prime minister – you'll see that the numbers are substantial. The big questions of history seem to be such a good preparation for leadership roles.

If I think, for instance, of my own special subject module at Lancaster looking at the 13th century, it's the world of Magna Carta and Simon de Montfort in the European context. The big questions we consider – such as how governments wield power, what are the limits of their rule, how can they be held to account, what possibilities are open to a female when she steps into a leadership role in a patriarchal world – are perennial. Thinking about these kinds of debates through history sets up history graduates to be leaders, whether that's in technology or industry, in teaching or in government.

GETTY IMAGES

THE PANEL

Sophie Ambler
is reader in medieval history and director of recruitment, conversion and marketing for the department of history at Lancaster University

Richard Partington
is a medieval historian and senior tutor at Churchill College, University of Cambridge

Jason Todd
is a PGCE tutor and teaching research fellow at the University of Oxford's Department of Education

Anna Whitelock
is a historian, author, broadcaster and *BBC History Magazine* columnist. She is chair in history at City, University of London

Leadership lessons
Substantial numbers of MPs, including Diane Abbott and Chris Skidmore (pictured), studied history at university

RD Earlier this year, Aston University and London's Southbank University announced plans to cut their history courses. What implications will cuts like these have for history as a discipline?

RP In my present job, as academic head of an institution which is 70 per cent STEM, I'm perhaps uniquely placed to answer this. I think we're in a phase in which there has been a rather crude understanding of the importance of STEM. Historical analysis shows that the UK has been underperforming in all sorts of ways – in terms of scientific development, engineering, research and development, a whole pile of things – so I understand why the government has pushed the STEM line so consistently. But I think this repeated assertion that STEM is the only way forward in terms of careers has really undercut what's been going on in history departments around the UK.

It's important that we remind ourselves of times when there have been real panics about the disappearance of subjects such as chemistry or mathematics. So the threat that history seems to be under right now is certainly something we should be considering, I think very seriously. But this is a moment, and the moment may shift.

RD Efforts are increasingly being made to "decolonise" the curriculum – to better represent non-European voices, and to improve historical awareness of the often problematic contexts of sources and events. How is this being achieved in practice, and should more be done?

> **"The ability to empathise with people with a very different world view is one of the reasons why history is so crucial now"**
> SOPHIE AMBLER

JT There's a danger that we look at decolonisation only in terms of diversifying the curriculum. One of the things that may come out of the discussion around decolonising is a need to really think about how race works: historically, in the present moment and, perhaps, in the future as well. But we don't do that by simply inserting new black and brown voices into the curriculum. Race is mutually constructing: we have to look at whiteness as well as ideas of blackness. So I think the curriculum can take us only so far.

For instance, we've got to remember that the university project, historically, was actually not separate from our imperialist ventures. Universities were the places where a lot of colonial knowledge was created and constructed. Certainly in Oxford, there's been quite a lot of work done examining the university's own role in that colonial project, and I think that is important.

RP We've also got to keep the politicians out of curricula. We need to resist culture war, either from the right or from the left, trying to take over what we do. We need to be in control, as historians, with our students, with one another, all together as a community, deciding what we study and why we study it. History shouldn't become a plaything of politicians.

AW Decolonisation is a buzzword but also an incredibly important priority, I think, across the university sector. At my previous institution, Royal Holloway, various people – not least some of the university's own students from black and Asian backgrounds – talked to us and taught us about what we need to do to reflect our student body, and how to decolonise things such as reading lists and so on. As academics we still have a hell of a lot to learn, and I don't think this is something that can happen overnight. We can't just say, as universities, "Yes, we've decolonised our reading list and that's all fine", because it's an evolving process.

Although decolonising reading lists is an important aspect, it's actually about inclusion and accessibility and diversity in a really broad sense. So decolonising is something that hits the headlines, but actually it's just one quite small part of an overall sea change in how universities go about doing what they do.

RD What impact is the Covid-19 pandemic continuing to have on students and study today, particularly in terms of remote learning?

AW In many ways, the opportunities and challenges of online teaching and assessments have been really interesting. For some people it's actually enhanced accessibility, and some students with physical disabilities or mental-health challenges have flourished this year. For students with social

ELEANOR SHAKESPEARE

anxiety and issues around coming on to campus, for example, learning online has been really helpful. However, in general I think that, though students want reading materials and so on online, they do want teaching in person and on campus. That's going to be really important to get back to.

SA One thing that I've noticed this year is how we've changed our approach to dissertations. We've had to think more carefully about what topics students can take on, because they don't necessarily have direct library access; we've had to look at areas for which there are online repositories of source material. The quality of some of the dissertations I've seen this year has been absolutely outstanding, because of the richness of engagement with primary sources. This has been one of the positives to come out of the situation: thinking about how to conduct research in a new way as an undergraduate.

RD If we were having this discussion in July 2022, what topics do you think we'd be covering?

RP We might be beginning to analyse, as historians, what's just happened to us all. It's currently still in the realms of political analysis but, in a year's time, we'll be able to start to step back a little and draw comparisons. Earlier today I saw data on the increase in wages – at the moment we think wage inflation is running at 8 per cent. This figure is heavily skewed by increases for some at the bottom of the pay scale, where the combination of the effects of the pandemic and Brexit has removed personnel from the economic stage, as many people from outside the UK working in lower-paid jobs have gone home. In short, if you're a lorry driver, for instance, you can now charge more for your labour than you did before, because there are fewer lorry drivers about.

Of course, I've got in my head the Black Death: one of its greatest ramifications, which government struggled with, was the economic impact of there being fewer people around. So I think we'll be starting to be excited by some of the repercussions of the current crisis.

SA Building on that, I would hope – but not necessarily expect – that we also use those skills as historians to work out how we tackle political discussion and debate, particularly when it comes to social media. The increasing polarisation of political opinion on the right and the left – and how history gets pulled into that – is a huge issue, and it's only being accelerated by social media algorithms. One of the big questions for historians is: how do we study that? And how do we archive those debates and discussions so that we can analyse them in the future?

ELEANOR SHAKESPEARE

> **"By next summer, I think historians will be beginning to get excited by some of the repercussions of the current Covid-19 crisis"**
>
> RICHARD PARTINGTON

JT A topic that we haven't spoken a lot about is climate change. Young people were taking to the streets, even before the Black Lives Matter protests, talking about climate change and activism. We need to think about how history fits in to this. Are the types of frameworks and scales of time we use able to deal with some of the questions that climate change is prompting? Taking the first point, current climate change issues demand a framework that goes beyond the nation state, as climate change affects the entire planet. And thinking about scales of time, a long view is needed for us to understand humanity's impact on the Earth. Perhaps these considerations will become foregrounded in relation to what we're doing as historians.

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Fern Riddell on a survey of sex work throughout history, from the ancient world to Edo Japan › page 83

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“The fighting lasted months, from when government forces shelled courts occupied by rebels on 27 June 1922”

Cormac Ó Gráda explores a new account of the Irish Civil War › page 80

WOMEN’S HISTORY

“Historically, marriage was virtually the only career open to the aspiring female”

Siân Evans on a look at the experiences of “women of independent means” › page 82

SECOND WORLD WAR

“A towering achievement, and a masterpiece that will change the way we think about the war”

Richard J Evans has high praise for Richard Overy’s new global history of WW2 › page 84

INTERVIEW

Saul David discusses *SBS: Silent Warriors* › page 76

ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN/JENI NOTT

INTERVIEW / SAUL DAVID

"It was astonishing bravery – and cold-blooded bravery, too"

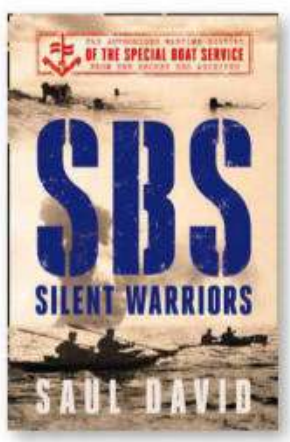
SAUL DAVID speaks to Rob Attar about his new authorised history of the Special Boat Service in the Second World War, explaining how the secretive maritime operations unit played a pivotal role in Allied victory

ON THE HistoryExtra PODCAST

Rob Attar: Could we begin by discussing the genesis of this book? The story of how it came about is a little unusual.
Saul David: It's very unusual. A couple of years ago I was contacted by my agent, who asked me if I would be interested in writing the authorised history of the Special Boat Service (SBS). And of course my initial reaction was: who wouldn't? But the reason my agent asked me is that they also happened to represent Paddy Ashdown, who was a former member of the SBS and had been commissioned to write the book. Very sadly, Paddy died rather suddenly towards the end of 2018, before the book was finished. So the question was: what happens next? Does someone finish Paddy's text or write a new version?

My agent approached me with both possibilities, and sent me the manuscript. It was very good but it was not what I would have written. Paddy came from the perspective of a practitioner – he was very close to the unit. His writing was very emotive, whereas I've always tried to keep an objective distance, as any historian does. Having read his early chapters, I decided it would make more sense to start from scratch. So we agreed that I would write the book in my own way, but would give due acknowledgement to Paddy in terms of the genesis.

This is an authorised history of a secretive organisation. How much access did you get? Were any aspects off limits?
They weren't, actually. If there was a problem at all it was that the archives could have been fuller. One thing about a secret organisation is that it doesn't encourage its members to keep first-hand accounts – certainly not at the time. Writing diaries and even letters during operations is considered a bit of a no-no. But, as far as the unit was concerned, and in terms of access to its archives down in Poole, I was given carte blanche to see everything.



SBS Silent Warriors: The Authorised Wartime History
by Saul David
(William Collins, 528 pages, £25)

The other important thing is that I decided what to put in the book. There was no "You can't put that in" from the SBS's perspective. Even so, I did get good access to documents and also to people, which was invaluable because it helped me understand where the unit is today and how it takes its bloodline from the Second World War very seriously.

A basic but important question: what exactly is the SBS?
Today it's known as the Special Boat Service. In the Second World War, it went by a number of different names. If we go back to the beginning, a key player in the story was Roger "Jumbo" Courtney, recognised today by the SBS as the father of the unit. He's the one who, towards the end of 1940, created the first maritime special operations unit, known as the Folbot Troop. (Folbots are folding canoes, which are incredibly useful for special operations because they allow you to move very low to the water and stealthily into your objective.) Gradually, as the war developed, not only was the SBS created, but also sister organisations: the COPPists [Combined Operations Pilotage Parties] and, later, the RMBPD [Royal Marines Boom Patrol Detachment].

Why was the SBS needed in the Second World War?
It came directly out of the Army Commandos, so we have to first explain why *they* were needed. If you think about the situation in June 1940, Britain was really in a hole. We'd been chased off the continent, so how on Earth were we going to stop the Germans from dominating Europe on the one hand and invading the UK on the other?

Churchill, being the pugnacious and rather optimistic character he was, quickly came to the understanding that we needed a force to strike back. Even if it wasn't going to achieve huge material damage, it would be a major psychological and PR success if we could show that we were still taking the fight to the enemy. So he came up with this idea of Army Commandos – this huge force of raiders who you could land on the coast anywhere around Europe. One of them was "Jumbo" Courtney, who thought: "OK, we can land in big groups and we can do a lot of damage, but we can also land in small groups – really small groups." Because if you think about it, a canoe has at most two people in it. And those canoes would enable people to get in and get out almost unseen. He believed that, even with a small number of people, you could create an awful lot of havoc.

What kind of men joined the SBS?
The type of person Courtney was looking for then is very much the type of person the SBS recruits today. You want unshowy, determined problem-solvers. They're not big, muscular, shouty, punching types; rather, they are the type of people you wouldn't notice in a crowd, but they have a very particular skill set. They are very self-disciplined.

When was the SBS first properly tested?
The unit was formed towards the end of 1940 and, a few months later, it was taken out into the Mediterranean with the rest of 8th Commando. Courtney was looking around for opportunities, and he came across a man called Nigel Willmott. Now, Willmott is the second of the three key figures in the story of the SBS. Having been a veteran of the Narvik Operation in Norway, he always realised the importance

JENI NOTT

PROFILE

Saul David is a historian, broadcaster and author of several acclaimed works of fiction and non-fiction, including *Crucible of Hell: Okinawa. The Last Great Battle of the Second World War* (William Collins, 2020) and *Operation Thunderbolt* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2015)

PHOTOGRAPH BY JENI NOTT

Paddle power Two canoeists in a wartime COPP vessel. This unit pioneered beach reconnaissance, which was "the single most important contribution" the SBS made to the Allied war effort, according to Saul David

of beach reconnaissance. In the early days, Courtney was thinking of SBS soldiers as saboteurs – as people who were going to cause havoc on a coastline. But Willmott was of the opinion that you go in quietly, you get information and then you leave. He told Courtney what he was planning and that he'd been given the job of getting as much information as possible about the beaches on Rhodes, because a big operation was planned to land there. And Courtney said: "I think we can do it with canoes."

So the first operation, in the spring of 1941, was carried out by Courtney and Willmott, these two giants of the story. They accomplished the mission, though it was daredevil stuff. Courtney almost drowned, they almost got bumped by German sentries, but they came back with this amazing cache of material that allowed the British to begin to prepare the invasion. Now, as it happened, the invasion never took place, but that didn't matter – it was proof of concept. They could now use canoes launched off submarines – and, of course, submarines could get anywhere in the world.

Operation Frankton must be the most dramatic episode in the story of the SBS. What happened there?

I'd better say a word first about the leader of the operation, Herbert "Blondie" Hasler, the third of the giants in the story. He was a regular Royal Marine who was very fit, very determined and very single-minded. Hasler was interested in blowing up ships in harbour, and in mid-1942 he was given the go-ahead to create the RMBPD. It was effectively a cover name for a secret Royal Marine commando unit whose job was to destroy shipping.

Frankton was an unbelievably optimistic operation. They were going to drop off six canoes, each manned by two people, at the entrance to the Gironde estuary [near Bordeaux, then in occupied France]. They would then paddle, over a period of three days in December 1942, 60 miles up the estuary, deep into enemy territory. And when they got to Bordeaux harbour they would sink some fast merchant ships that had been moving vital supplies back and forth between Axis ports.

Only five pairs of men started the mission from the submarine, about five miles off the coast, because one of the canoes got damaged. And only two got all the way to Bordeaux. The fate of the others didn't become known until after the operation: two of those canoes had overturned, and another pair were captured on their way in.

So just two pairs reached Bordeaux. When it got dark, they began their attack. It was an incredibly dangerous operation: they were almost spotted on a number of occasions, and there were moments when they almost gave the game away – but they didn't, and they managed to put limpet mines on five ships. And then they began their exfiltration.

This was where things got particularly tricky, because they had to escape through occupied France into Spain. Given that very few of the men could speak foreign languages, there was little chance of success. And so it proved: of the two crews who carried out the operation, only Hasler and his canoeist, Bill Sparks, after more amazing drama, managed to get to Spain.

> **"The carnage on Omaha, in my view and in the view of the SBS, was partly the result of the Americans not trusting the SBS to put up markers prior to the arrival of their landing craft"**

Does this highlight just how dangerous SBS missions were?

It was arguably one of the most dangerous things to do in the Second World War. Just imagine being on one of these canoes, one of two men heading to lonely shores to carry out missions, with no backup and hardly any firepower. And, from October 1942 [following Hitler's Commando Order], they faced the likelihood that if they were caught, they would be executed – which is exactly what happened to six of Hasler's men.

Yet I haven't found a single instance, all the way through the Second World War, in which someone said: "Do you know what? I'm not doing it." It was astonishing bravery – and cold-blooded bravery, too. There was rarely a big firefight; you were just moving slowly into a coast.

A special COPP suit from 1943. SBS men had little protection from the elements – or the enemy

The beach reconnaissance aspect came to the fore in the invasions of Sicily and Normandy. What was the role of the SBS in those two operations?

This was really the job of the COPPists. By the end of 1942, Nigel Willmott was given authorisation to create a dedicated unit that would be involved in beach reconnaissance. He'd argued that we needed proper information about what was on the beaches, the exits, the firmness of the beaches, and of course the gradients leading into the beaches and any defences that were there.

So they created this amazing unit, COPP. Within COPP there were navigators like Willmott, but also SBS-trained engineers who would go in and get all the military information from the beaches. It was an all-purpose unit that began to prove its worth in Sicily, which was its first deployment.

Though the invasion of Sicily took place in July 1943, the COPPists had been on the coast as early as March.

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM: MH_022716, UNI_003914

Silent strike force
Commandos train with a two-man canoe in 1941. SBS founder Roger "Jumbo" Courtney insisted that these vessels would allow the Allies to create havoc on enemy shores

BRIDGEMAN

They need to be doing this work months in advance and, though a lot of them were lost in the early operations – they drowned, they were captured, they were killed in firefights – there was very much a sense that it worked. If it was done properly, it could get the information to guarantee, as far as possible, that the huge landings planned for D-Day would succeed.

How much did the SBS shape the planning for D-Day?
This would be the greatest amphibious invasion in history, so the Allies needed to know that those beaches were firm enough to take all the wheeled transport and tanks that would be rolling over them within hours of the first troops landing. So the first and most crucial job given to the COPPists was to land on a couple of those beaches – the ones at the intersection between Juno and Gold, where the Canadian and British soldiers were going to land – and find out whether the beaches were firm enough. There was a suspicion they might not be, and until they knew for sure, all planning was on hold.

Willmott picked two of his best people – Major Logan Scott-Bowden and Sergeant Bruce Ogden-Smith – to swim into the heavily guarded beaches of Normandy and gather information during the night of New Year's Eve 1943. They did a pretty good survey of the beaches and their defences, and obtained the most important information of all: that those beaches would hold the wheeled traffic.

A month later, they carried out a second beach reconnaissance surveying the defences at Omaha. There they got crucial information about the sophistication of the German defences.

As well as gathering information in advance, COPP also guided in the forces during the actual landings, both as pilots on the landing craft and also, even more importantly, using Midget submarines to put up markers to show the landing craft the right way to go.

On D-Day itself, in places where they used these Midget submarines – that is, in the Canadian and British sectors – everyone got to the right place and landed properly. But the carnage on Omaha, in my view and in the view of the SBS at the time, was partly the result of the Americans not trusting the SBS to put up markers prior to the arrival of their landing craft. The result of this, combined with the bad weather and strong tides, was that enormous numbers of American troops at Omaha landed at the wrong place.

The Americans were worried that these markers would give the game away, which of course was a very serious danger. But there was a calculation among the British in their planning for D-Day that it was better to get to the right place and risk the chance of the operation being discovered. And they were proved right.

Overall, how important was the SBS to the Allied war effort?
It is a hugely underestimated contribution that made a real difference in a number of ways. In a psychological sense, it really gave the British a chance to strike back, from the earliest days. These operations were happening all the time, and they were heavily publicised: if there was a major success, you can be damn sure people were told about it. And there was also the material effect they had, particularly in the Mediterranean, where a lot of railways and coastal infrastructure was destroyed.

But the single most important contribution was the beach reconnaissance, because it had a major impact on all the big landings – Sicily, Italy, Normandy – and also in the far east. If there's one thing I hope my book does, it's to give due recognition, particularly to the COPPists but to all those who come under the broader SBS banner, for the contribution they made, which has not been properly recognised up to now.

That's an interesting point – because an equivalent service, the SAS, is very well known today. Why do you think the SBS seems to have lived in that unit's shadow?
It's partly because of the ways they operated. There's this great comparison between the SAS and the SBS, then and now: the SAS likes to burst in through the front door, making a lot of noise, whereas the SBS comes in the back door – stealthily, and leaving without being known. I think the sort of people who go into a unit like that are the sort of people who don't like shouting about their achievements. They didn't in the Second World War, they didn't after the war, and arguably they still don't even today.

I think one of the reasons this book has been authorised is because the SBS certainly does want its history to be acknowledged. It's been long enough now. They want to be recognised for what they did then, and I think there's a sense that there will be a bit of reflected glory for what they do now. H

MORE FROM US

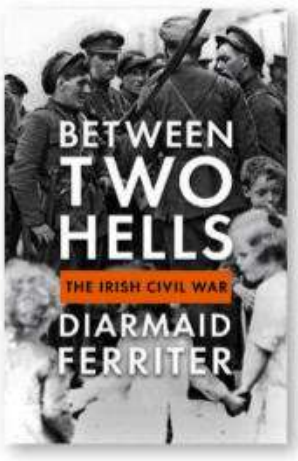
Listen to an extended version of this interview with Saul David on our podcast at **historyextra.com/podcast**

Clashes commence
Smoke billows from Dublin's Four Courts, occupied by opponents of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, during bombardment by the National Army in June 1922

IRELAND

War between friends

CORMAC Ó GRÁDA commends an ambitious attempt to objectively examine the conflict that pitted Irish people against each other in the wake of the bloody War of Independence



Between Two Hells: The Irish Civil War
by Diarmaid Ferriter
Profile Books, 336 pages, £20

Since 2012, Ireland has been commemorating a decade of centenaries, starting with the Third Home Rule Bill in April 1912 and the mass signing of the Ulster Covenant in September 1912, and ending with the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922–23. The high point so far has been the centenary parade marking the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin, attended by hundreds of thousands of people. Dublin was abuzz, and a BBC reporter at the event described "an Ireland at ease with its past". The event's military trappings were, if anything, ironic; they featured military vehicles from another era and a fly-past by six single-engine training aircraft. This was the easy bit, however.

Most commemorating so far has been low-key, respecting what President Michael D Higgins, who has a way with words, described as a "hospitality of narratives". Inevitably, there have been glitches. One was the aborted attempt in January 2020 to include a commemoration of policemen killed by the IRA in the War of Independence. For many familiar with the record of the Royal Irish Constabulary in 1919–21, that was one step too far.

Then, some months later, on the centenary of a major IRA ambush on crown forces at Kilmichael in County Cork, a Sinn Féin member of parliament caused a stir when he likened the carnage there to the killing of 18 British soldiers by Provisional IRA bombs near Newry in 1979. And the centenary of the Government of Ireland Act (1920), which led to the border between north and south – a thorny issue once again in these days of Brexit – was glossed over lightly, with the Irish government limiting its commemoration to sponsoring an academic conference in Belfast.

Commemorating the Irish Civil War, which pitted the forces of a government that supported the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 – which paved the way for the separation of Northern Ireland from the new Irish Free State – against a sizeable minority who rejected it, may prove another test of public opinion. In Ireland, recent history does not just lie down.

Diarmaid Ferriter, Ireland's best-known and most prolific historian, has a knack for producing timely books. *A Nation and Not a Rabble: The Irish Revolution 1913–1923* (2015) marked the beginning of the commemorations, while *The Border: The Legacy of a Century of Anglo-Irish Politics* (2019)

ALAMY

explored partition in 1920. Now comes a history of the Irish Civil War. All three enrich lucid and judicious accounts of events and personalities with fresh archival evidence; all also dwell at length on the aftermath of those events.

By international standards, the Irish Civil War was a small conflict. It took fewer lives than the War of Independence that preceded it – less than 0.1 per cent of the population, in fact. Compare that with the 1 and 2.5 per cent lost in well-known civil wars in Spain and the United States, respectively. The Irish Civil War was also relatively short, albeit bitter. The fighting lasted 10 months, from when government forces shelled the Four Courts occupied by anti-Treaty rebels on 28 June 1922, until 30 April 1923, when the latter declared a ceasefire. As a conventional war, though, it was over within a month, descending thereafter into guerrilla warfare increasingly confined to the south and west.

Both sides committed atrocities. Censorship kept some of the horrors inflicted by the pro-Treaty side out of the public realm during the war. Ferriter highlights two of the most notorious, at Ballyseedy and Clashmealcon in County Kerry. In a third, carried out in Bahaghs near Cahirciveen on 12 March 1923, five "Irregulars" (as pro-government spokesmen described the anti-Treaty forces) were shot in the legs at a roadblock before being deposited on a mine detonated by army troops. In their brutality and extralegality, such killings exceeded anything committed by British forces in 1919–21. At the same time, violence against civilians was relatively rare, though Ferriter draws attention to some instances of rape and sectarian murders.

The other civil wars mentioned above had strong class aspects. Whereas in Ireland class was a poor predictor of how deputies voted in the Treaty debates, contemporaries nonetheless tended to identify the quest by the landless for land with "Irregularism"; and, as Ferriter notes, during the fighting in Cork city, "class tensions were paramount". Still, almost from the outset the conflict was dubbed in Irish "*cogadh na gcarad*" (the war between friends), and it did divide siblings and neighbours. It took less time for the wounds to heal in Ireland than in Spain or the US, though; it helped that followers of both sides supported Irish neutrality during the Second World War, and served together in the Irish defence forces.

This is an excellent and fair-minded study, and deserves to be widely read and discussed. Readers will get a feel for both the pro-Treaty line – that to call the conflict a civil war was "a libel on civil war" – and the competing claim that pressure from Britain was its root cause. They will also learn to be more empathetic towards activists on both sides.

SOPHIE DAVIDSON

One quibble with *Between Two Hells* is a slight lack of balance in terms of contents and omissions. Part One, on the war itself, is shorter that Part Two, discussing what followed. The latter contains a great deal about military pensions, on which Ferriter draws heavily from an archive unavailable to previous historians of the Irish Civil War. Here one senses that the very richness of the archive is influencing the structure of the narrative, and that a cold analysis of all of the evidence might temper the impressions left by poignant but atypical cases.

A second quibble is that there is so little on the economic cost. The war resulted in significant destruction of property and infrastructure, estimated soon after its end at £30m, and waging it cost an additional £17m. The ramifications of such a burden on the nascent economy, with a GDP of about £150m, might have been teased out.

"The Irish Civil War was relatively short, albeit bitter; as a conventional war it was over within a month, descending thereafter into guerrilla warfare"

One by-product was the new state's inability to pay its imperial contribution under the Anglo-Irish Treaty, which weakened its bargaining power during the negotiations on revising the north-south boundary in 1924–25. The Boundary Agreement of 1925 removed the liability of the new state for a share of the UK national debt, but at the cost of accepting the permanence of the north-south border. Another result was that fiscal constraints and a reluctance to tax the rich forced the government to take electorally unpopular measures, starting with a reduction in old-age pension payments in 1924. In the longer run, the economics of the conflict favoured former "Irregulars" who followed Éamon de Valera a few years later in taking the constitutional route to making their voices heard. They would have the final word after the general elections of 1932 and 1933. H

Cormac Ó Gráda is the author of *Jewish Ireland in the Age of Joyce* (Princeton University Press, 2006) and *Eating People Is Wrong, and Other Essays on Famine, its Past and its Future* (Princeton University Press, 2015)

AUTHORS ON THE PODCAST

Fatima Manji on Britain's historical relationship with the eastern world

"I believe that Britain has been schooled out of its love for the region that I describe as the Orient. My book takes you on a journey from Elizabethan England to the First World War, and I found many fascinating, intriguing and sometimes disturbing stories about how Britain interacted with that part of the world. For me, it reveals something about British history that we have forgotten."

Anna Neima on bids to build utopian societies after WWI

"A manifesto, a good decision-making process and some kind of sustainable economic model are all very important in setting up a 'utopian' community. But I think that all of these communities do end up having a lot of internal friction."

Sarah Ferguson, Duchess of York on the process of writing historical fiction

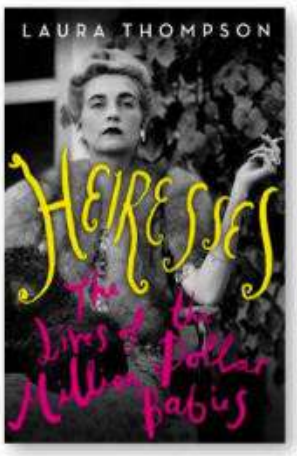
"I am fascinated by what I call the 'voice of silent whispers' – very strong women who never had a voice in their own lifetime. I began researching my own family history and thought that there must be a redhead somewhere in my family – and sure enough I found Lady Margaret Montagu Scott, who was both fabulously red-headed and a very strong lady. From that moment I wanted to do my lovely Lady Margaret justice and bring her back to life again."

ON THE HistoryExtra PODCAST

WOMEN'S HISTORY

Golden girls

SIÂN EVANS recommends an entertaining introduction to the adventures of independently wealthy women in Britain over the past four centuries



Heiresses: The Lives of the Million Dollar Babies
by Laura Thompson
Apollo, 384 pages. £25

Marriage agency Edwina Ashley, pictured on her wedding day to Lord Mountbatten in 1922. Like other heiresses, she took a great deal of control – in her choice of husband and her marriage – and conducted many affairs

GETTY IMAGES

To paraphrase Jane Austen, it is a truth universally acknowledged that a woman in possession of a good fortune is in need of a husband. Historically, marriage was virtually the only career open to the aspiring female. Even the plainest Jane gained allure if it was known that she was an heiress. However, inherited wealth brought its own problems. How could any girl be sure that it was her personal qualities, rather than her fortune, fuelling the ardour of potential spouses?

In this witty, wide-ranging and intelligent social history, Laura Thompson explores the changing experiences of moneyed women between the 17th and 21st centuries. Some deployed their fortunes to achieve bold, independent lives, often to the miffed disapproval of wider society. Others fell for rotters who were determined to mine the millions from their quarries. Weighing romance against finance was a life-changing decision, especially when divorce was all but impossible.

Naive 18th-century English heiresses may have been bustled over the Scottish border for quickie marriages at Gretna Green, but not all moneyed women were simpering simpletons. The "Buccaneers", as Edith Wharton termed them, were the sophisticated daughters of American entrepreneurs who crossed the Atlantic from the New World to the Old in pursuit of husbands with historic titles and impressive landed estates. Jennie Jerome and Consuelo Vanderbilt were among the 102 American heiresses who found aristocratic British husbands between 1870 and 1914. Like the fictional Lady Cora in *Downton Abbey*, their inherited loot saved venerable country houses and their inhabitants from ruin. Any snooty abrasiveness about origins in "trade" was assuaged by the soothing green poultice of freshly printed dollars.

Some heiresses were plainly not the marrying kind. Winnaretta Singer, rich as Croesus thanks to the domestic sewing machine, spent her first wedding night crouched on top of the wardrobe, hissing at her puzzled new husband. After that union was annulled, Winnaretta contracted a "lavender marriage" to Prince Edmond de Polignac, with whom she organised glittering Parisian salons; she supplied the millions, he brought the prestigious title, and they each found lovers of their own sex.

Some heiresses expressed their individuality in ways that might have caused them great difficulties had they not been wealthy. Gertrude Stein and Peggy Guggenheim each single-mindedly created the social milieu they desired. Edwina Ashley, who inherited £2m from her grandfather, married the man of her choice, Lord Louis Mountbatten, but also maintained a complex love life that was the scandal of London. American-born Laura Corrigan used her millions to fund her entrée into European Society. Though ridiculed for her malapropisms, she threw extravagant parties with Cartier keepsakes as prizes, and made the "Bright Young Things" dance while she acted as ringmaster. Her rival London hostess was Lady Emerald Cunard, as glittering and multi-faceted as her adopted forename. The semi-detached wife of a British baronet, Lady Cunard was a patron of the opera, hobnobbed with royalty, and bankrolled her faithless lover, the conductor Sir Thomas Beecham.

Emerald astutely remarked that "Life is less sad with money", but it was her own daughter who personified the unhappy heiress. Rebellious Nancy Cunard challenged racial discrimination and snobbery, but her uncompromising life unravelled while the public looked on, aghast. She died alone weighing 4 stone, ravaged by alcohol and drugs, her wealth greatly reduced.

Those of us unencumbered by wealth dearly love a cautionary tale, and in *Heiresses* Laura Thompson perceptively acknowledges the vicarious thrill to be found in rich people's love lives, triumphs, scandals and disasters, while providing valuable insights into one aspect of women's history. H

Siân Evans is the author of *Maiden Voyages* (Two Roads, 2020) and *Queen Bees* (Two Roads, 2016)

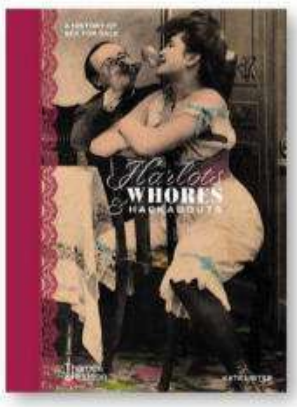
Burning desire A c1880 reprint of an 18th-century woodblock print, showing a courtesan smoking a pipe with a customer in Japan. Kate Lister's book explores the lives of sex workers across the world

BRIDGEMAN

SOCIAL HISTORY

The oldest profession

FERN RIDDELL enjoys an introduction to the history of sex work – and, crucially, to the stories of the women and men who have undertaken it since ancient times



Harlots, Whores & Hackabouts: A History of Sex for Sale
by Kate Lister
Thames & Hudson, 256 pages, £25

The follow-up to Kate Lister's debut, *A Curious History of Sex*, is equally ambitious: a global history of sex work. Using diverse examples ranging from medieval Europe to Edo-period Japan (17th–19th centuries) and Qing-dynasty China (1644–1912), Lister explores the lives of sex workers through the ages. To do so, she draws on the histories of the many women who have sold sex, and also showcases the desire and commerce of men who engaged in the trade, from the brothels of ancient Rome to the molly houses of Regency England.

Illustrated with beautiful works of erotic art and images of sex workers themselves, this detailed history provides a new understanding of sex as business. The book opens with Lister's clarion call to reclaim the history of sex work from a current preoccupation with horror, observing that our fascination with the "Ripper myth" – the narrative surrounding the murder of numerous women by a violent criminal or criminals in the late 1880s – has coloured our understanding of sex workers in history. This book is Lister's repudiation not only of the place sex workers occupy in culture today, but also of how they have been viewed in the past. What emerges is an engrossing exploration of individual lives and societies' approaches to sex work across the centuries.

> **"This book is the author's repudiation not only of the place sex workers occupy in culture today, but also of how they have been viewed in the past"**

Lister begins with the idea of "sacred prostitution", by which women and girls in the ancient world might give their virginity to Aphrodite as an offering before marriage. The ancient Cypriot custom of sending virgins to the seashore to make this "first fruit offering" allowed young women to gain both money to cover their dowry and also sexual experience and understanding before they decided on a husband.

Lister makes clear that the role in society of sex for sale was dramatically impacted by the rise of the Christian church. In AD 390, after the Roman emperors condemned male sex workers, mobs dragged these men out of the brothels in which they had long lived and worked, to be burned in the street. The church's attempts to identify and control female sex workers is also discussed in chapters on medieval Europe, drawing heavily on 13th and 14th-century English legislation.

We learn that in 1277, London, York, Coventry, Leicester and Bristol tried to ban sex workers from living or operating within their city walls. Less than a century later, English sex workers were ordered to walk the streets in a specifically striped hood, identifying them to everyone. However, as Lister makes clear, no one working in the regulated brothels of this era was allowed to be held against their will. This was not a period that accepted the trafficking or trade of women for sex without their consent.

This is the tightrope Lister walks throughout the book: she showcases incredible stories of agency and freedom while also recognising social stigmatisation and hardship. The modern world may allow sex workers to speak for themselves but, as Lister writes, for those in the past "it is time to move beyond the fantasy. It is time to look, listen and learn." H

Fern Riddell is a historian and writer specialising in sex, suffrage and Victorian culture. Her latest book is *Sex: Lessons from History* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2021)

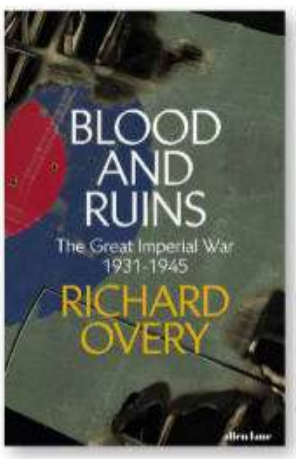
First offensive
The Japanese Kwantung Army in Manchuria. Japan's invasion of this Chinese region marked the real beginning of the global conflict that came to be known as the Second World War, argues Richard Overy

BRIDGEMAN

SECOND WORLD WAR

The end of empires

RICHARD J EVANS lauds an innovative work that re-examines the Second World War in the context of global imperial ambitions



Blood and Ruins: The Great Imperial War 1931–1945
by Richard Overy
Allen Lane, 1040 pages. £40

In this ambitious new book, Richard Overy seeks to reshape our understanding of the Second World War. It was, he says, a single global conflict that began not, as conventionally narrated, with the German invasion of Poland in 1939, but far earlier, with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. Many previous histories of the war have treated the European and Asian theatres of conflict separately. In *Total War* (1972), Peter Calvocoressi and Guy Wint each looked at one of the two theatres. Gerhard L Weinberg's *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (1994) made a valiant effort to fulfil the promise of its subtitle but focused above all on the conflict in Europe, incorporating Japan only because it was an "associate" of Hitler's Germany. By contrast, *Blood and Ruins* integrates both aspects far more coherently into a single interpretative framework.

Overy manages to pull off this feat because he recasts the war as "the last imperial war", fought not between rival nation states or ideologies but between global, multinational empires. These were the "haves", principally Britain and France along with the Netherlands, and the "have-nots", above all Germany, Italy and Japan, who sought to create empires of their own – Germany on the European continent, Italy in the Mediterranean, Japan in the Pacific.

In one of the great ironies of history, a war fought between empires over the right to rule others ended in consigning empires to the dustbin of history. Defeat by the Germans in 1940 undermined the global prestige of countries such as France and the Netherlands. Defeat by the Japanese did the same to the British in Asia in 1942. Defeat by the Allies swept aside the imperial pretensions of Germany, Italy and Japan. And national

liberation movements moved into the power vacuum this created: instead of the restoration of imperial power expected by the victors in 1945, an unstoppable wave of decolonisation swept the globe.

This process was furthered by the hostility to imperialism put into action by the Soviet Union and the US, two central combatant states that don't quite fit into the framework of an "imperial war". Both were hegemonic superpowers in the postwar era, but neither created a self-conscious colonial empire for itself. Overy is surely right to stress that the war represented a historic turning point, bringing to an end an age of empire that had begun as far back as the 18th century. A long historical period of European expansion gave way within just a few years to a brief period of European contraction in which a global order based on empires was replaced by a world made up of nation states.

Within this overall interpretation, Overy delivers in his first four chapters a brisk narrative of the origins and course of the war in all its theatres. There's a great deal of conventional military history here, with individual battles covered in detail and all the commanding officers on each side painstakingly identified by name. But there are also illuminating discussions of the ruthless policies adopted by imperial powers in an attempt to assert their authority in areas from Poland to Burma, as well as a well-informed account of the Holocaust that integrates it into the wider picture of the war without reducing it to just another genocidal atrocity among many. As Overy rightly says, the Jews were not a regional obstacle to be annihilated in the push to set up a new colonial order in eastern Europe but, rather, "the world enemy" of German efforts to construct a German-centred imperial order.

In the remaining eight chapters of the book, Overy turns to a detailed analytical discussion of key aspects of the conflict, from the mobilisation of populations to the harnessing of industrial economies for the purpose of waging war. There are admirably clear discussions of the technical advantages and disadvantages of various kinds of weapons, from tanks to combat aircraft, and the financial expedients that states devoted to enabling their manufacture in staggering quantities.

A judicious chapter on the question of just and unjust aspects of the war, in which all of the combatant powers were morally compromised (albeit some more than others), leads to coverage of the unprecedentedly intense involvement of civilian populations in what had become in almost every respect a "total war". Subjected to bombing raids by the enemy, mobilised in resistance movements, drafted into partisan units, killed by occupying powers, deported and – in the case of European Jews – annihilated, civilians suffered and died as the dividing line between combatants and non-combatants became progressively more blurred. No wonder, Overy points out in what is perhaps his most original chapter, that the emotional costs for everyone involved were so high.

Finally, before he reaches a concluding chapter in which he sums up the historical transformations wrought by the war, Overy turns to a survey of crimes and atrocities, and the wholesale violation by all sides of laws and conventions of warfare agreed by the international community over the preceding decades. Some of this is so horrifying that it is very difficult to read. Atrocity bred atrocity as different forms of violence, from battlefield encounters to colonial "pacification" and bitter internal conflicts and civil wars, created among many combatants a visceral feeling that the people they fought against were not really human. Most of these terrible crimes went unpunished, though the violence did lead to new concepts emerging with which they could be confronted, including "genocide" and "crimes against humanity".

"In one of the great ironies of history, a war fought between empires over the right to rule others ended in consigning empires to the dustbin of history"

These thematic, analytical chapters don't seem to be arranged in any particular order; after the narrative part of the book, the momentum gets lost, so that one can dip into them according to one's inclinations and requirements. There are also points on which, inevitably, the argument provokes dissent rather than acceptance. Overall, however, this book is a towering achievement: a summation of a life's work. Overy has written a masterpiece that will change the way we think about the war, and will remain on our bookshelves for many years to come. H

Richard J Evans is regius professor emeritus of history at the University of Cambridge. His latest book is *The Hitler Conspiracies: The Third Reich and the Paranoid Imagination* (Allen Lane, 2020)

GETTY IMAGES

YOU RECOMMEND

We asked our Twitter followers which history books they're most looking forward to reading as autumn approaches...

@mrbwteach
Powers and Thrones: A New History of the Middle Ages, sure to be another rip-roaring read from Dan Jones.

@dandiedinmont
Tracy Borman's *Crown and Sceptre: A New History of the British Monarchy*, exploring the institution of the monarchy from 1066 to the present day, and anticipating the platinum jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. Everyone is fascinated by royal history, and this is sure to be a must-read!

@emrysolivaw
I am on the edge of my seating waiting for Sarah Gristwood's *The Tudors in Love: The Courtly Code Behind the Last Medieval Dynasty.* Her exploration of the 16th century is refreshing.

@richwillco1
Kilmichael: The Life and Afterlife of an Ambush by Eve Morrison, an analysis of an ambush on RIC [Royal Irish Constabulary] Auxiliaries in November 1920 during the Irish War of Independence.

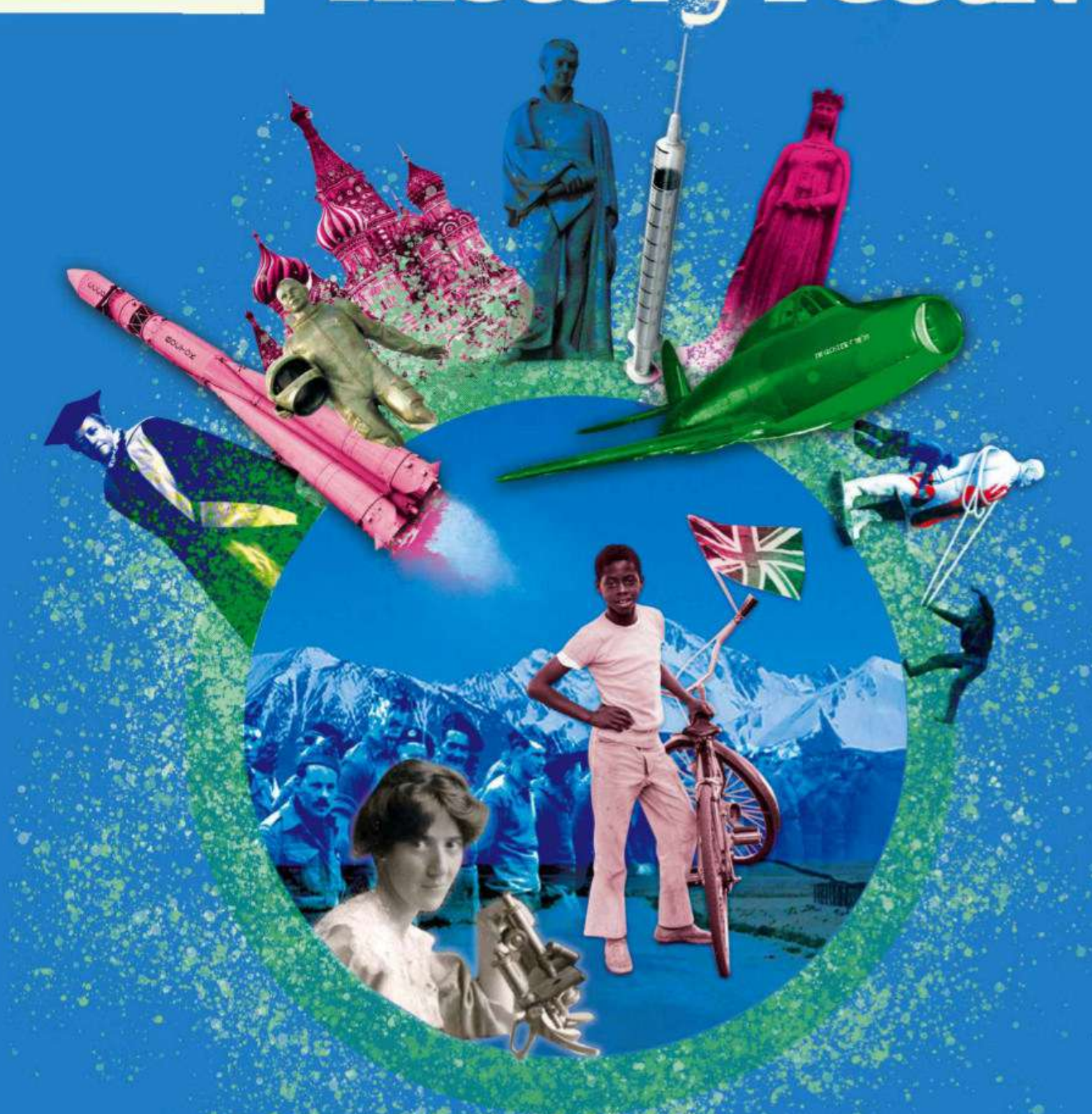
@nbuchanan74
Matthew Lewis's *Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine: Founding an Empire*. Both people I find fascinating!

@tendenzioes
I got inspired by your podcast and am looking forward to *Antwerp: The Glory Years* by Michael Pye.

@DaughterofLir
Living Like a Tudor: Woodsmoke and Sage: A Sensory Journey Through Tudor England by Amy Licence. I want to get as close as I can to the sights, sounds and smells of the Tudor court – so close that I can almost touch it.

A late 16th-century engraving of a view of Antwerp. Michael Pye's new history of the city is a recent publishing highlight

Gloucester History Festival



Saturday 4 - Sunday 19 September 2021

gloucesterhistoryfestival.co.uk

Speakers include: Dan Snow * Sathnam Sanghera * Janina Ramirez * Jess Phillips
Max Hastings * Jonathan Dimbleby * Michael Wood * Dan Jones * Natalie Haynes

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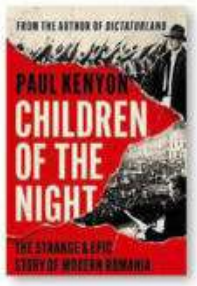
WORDS BY **ELLIE CAWTHORNE** AND **MATT ELTON**

EUROPE

Children of the Night: The Strange and Epic Story of Modern Romania
by Paul Kenyon
(Head of Zeus, 496 pages, £25)

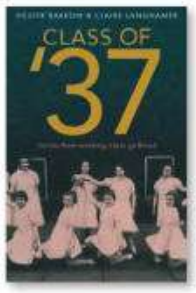


A scarred century

From absolute monarchy to fascist ally of Hitler and then communist dictatorship, 20th-century Romania oscillated between regimes in quick succession, each leaving deep scars. Paul Kenyon's book delves into this history, bringing to life a rogues' gallery of characters including unstable playboy King Carol II, charismatic far-right mystic Corneliu Codreanu and the corrupt and deluded Ceaușescu.

SOCIAL HISTORY

Class of '37: Voices from Working-Class Girlhood
by Hester Barron and Claire Langhamer
(John Blake, 272 pages, £16.99)



Voices from the past

In 1937, a class of 12 and 13-year-old girls from Bolton wrote a series of essays on subjects including their dreams for the future, holidays in Blackpool, and what heaven and hell might look like. Hester Barron and Claire Langhamer use these essays, combined with Mass Observation accounts and relatives' memories, to build a moving microhistory of working-class girlhood in the northern mill town.

FICTION

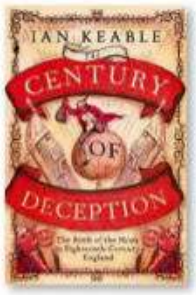
The Shadowing
by Rhiannon Ward
(Trapeze, 320 pages, £16.99)

Paupers and phantoms

Southwell Workhouse plays haunted house in this ghostly tale inspired by a Victorian institution in Nottinghamshire. The story follows Hester's attempts to uncover how her sister, Mercy, died a pauper in the workhouse. But Mercy's death is not the only mystery Hester must unravel after she stumbles on a plot involving missing children and a baby-stealing spectral lady who stalks the corridors by night.

GEORGIAN

The Century of Deception: The Birth of the Hoax in 18th-Century England
by Ian Keable
(Westbourne Press, 320 pages, £20)

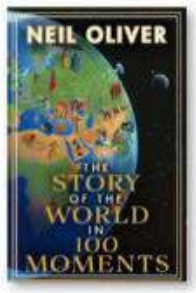


More fool you

In 1726, Surrey woman Mary Toft began giving birth to rabbits. That bafflingly successful ruse was just one of several bizarre and elaborate hoaxes to take Britain by storm in the 18th century. As author and magician Ian Keable reveals, strange episodes of ghosts, levitation and a man who could climb inside a bottle fooled not only the fee-paying public but also some of the best minds of the age.

GLOBAL

The Story of the World in 100 Moments
by Neil Oliver
(Bantam Press, 432 pages, £25)

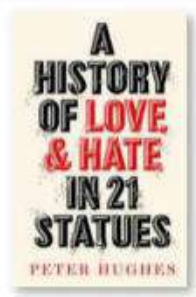


Around the world

Historian and broadcaster Neil Oliver turns his hand to globe-trotting, big-picture history, charting 100 episodes that led to the present. He's candid about the personal nature of his choices, and unafraid to shape their selection in the service of his wider narrative: the medieval era arrives relatively late on, and many chapters head beyond the west. Oliver is an evocative storyteller, vividly bringing his tales to life.

HERITAGE

A History of Love & Hate in 21 Statues
by Peter Hughes
(Aurum, 336 pages, £20)

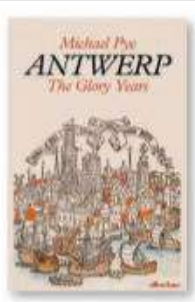


Fragments of time

Opening with Percy Bysshe Shelley's evocative ode to a desiccated statue of pharaoh Ozymandias – the effigy complete with its ironic command to "look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!" – this book considers why statues, and their removal, continue to provoke strong emotions. It also tells the stories of 21 acts of statuary destruction, why they took place, and what they tell us about our view of the past.

EUROPE

Antwerp: The Glory Years
by Michael Pye
(Allen Lane, 288 pages, £25)

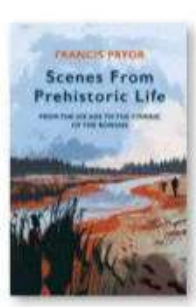


Inner-city tension

Celebrating the city as a space within which all possibilities seem achievable, this profile of 16th-century Antwerp chronicles the figures and forces that transformed the city port into a global nexus. But then everything changed: Spanish soldiers mutinied, killing thousands of its residents. The episode would set the city on a collision course with Habsburg Spain, forever reshaping its future and burying its past.

PREHISTORY

Scenes from Prehistoric Life
by Francis Pryor
(Apollo, 320 pages, £25)



Distant past

Our prehistoric cousins lie on the other side of a vast expanse of time, the intervening centuries rendering their lives and deaths, hopes and dreams tantalisingly remote. Francis Pryor bridges that gap, showing how excavation and analysis can bring their stories to life. Of course, the gap between us and them is matched by the prehistoric era's epic sweep, and Pryor charts the changes witnessed across that time. H

WATCH

Arctic adventure

Even in the age of CGI, heading out on location brings a sense of realism that's hard to replicate through post-production trickery. Which in great part explains why key scenes in *The North Water*, a tale of whalers set in the middle of the 19th century, were filmed in frozen Arctic seas around the Norwegian Svalbard Archipelago, including segments captured in the pack ice.

Adapted by director Andrew Haigh from Ian McGuire's acclaimed novel, the five-part drama follows a ramshackle crew of chancers and crooks as they voyage north out of Hull at a time when the whaling industry was in decline.

Those making the trip include Patrick Sumner (Jack O'Connell), a disgraced army surgeon who signs up to be ship's doctor and soon has cause to regret his decision. His crewmates include skipper Arthur Brownlee (Stephen Graham) and, fatefully, Henry Drax (Colin Farrell), a vicious psychopath who makes his coin as a harpooner. Rounding out a strong cast, Tom Courtenay stars as the whaler's owner, Baxter.

The North Water
BBC Two / Expected to air in early September

BBC

ENCOUNTERS

88 DIARY: LISTEN / WATCH / VISIT
By **Jonathan Wright, Rhiannon Davies** and **Samantha Nott**
94 EXPLORE... Gloucester

Dangerous waters
Colin Farrell (left, playing harpooner Henry Drax) is among a strong cast to star in *The North Water*, which follows the fortunes of a collection of chancers and crooks navigating Arctic seas

LISTEN

Hilarious history

As part of his mission to bring an appreciation of history to "people who don't like history… and those who do", Greg Jenner (pictured above) returns with a fourth series of his podcast, *You're Dead to Me*. The format remains unchanged, as the *Horrible Histories* historical consultant brings together comedians and experts to discuss the past in irreverent style.

Guests include comedian Sally Phillips, who explores the history of fairy stories. Plus author and historian Peter Frankopan offers his take on Ivan the Terrible, and regular guest Desiree Burch helps tell the story of singer and activist Paul Robeson.

You're Dead to Me
BBC Sounds / New episodes released weekly

A demonstration at Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, May 1982. An episode of *Archive on 4* delves into the protest

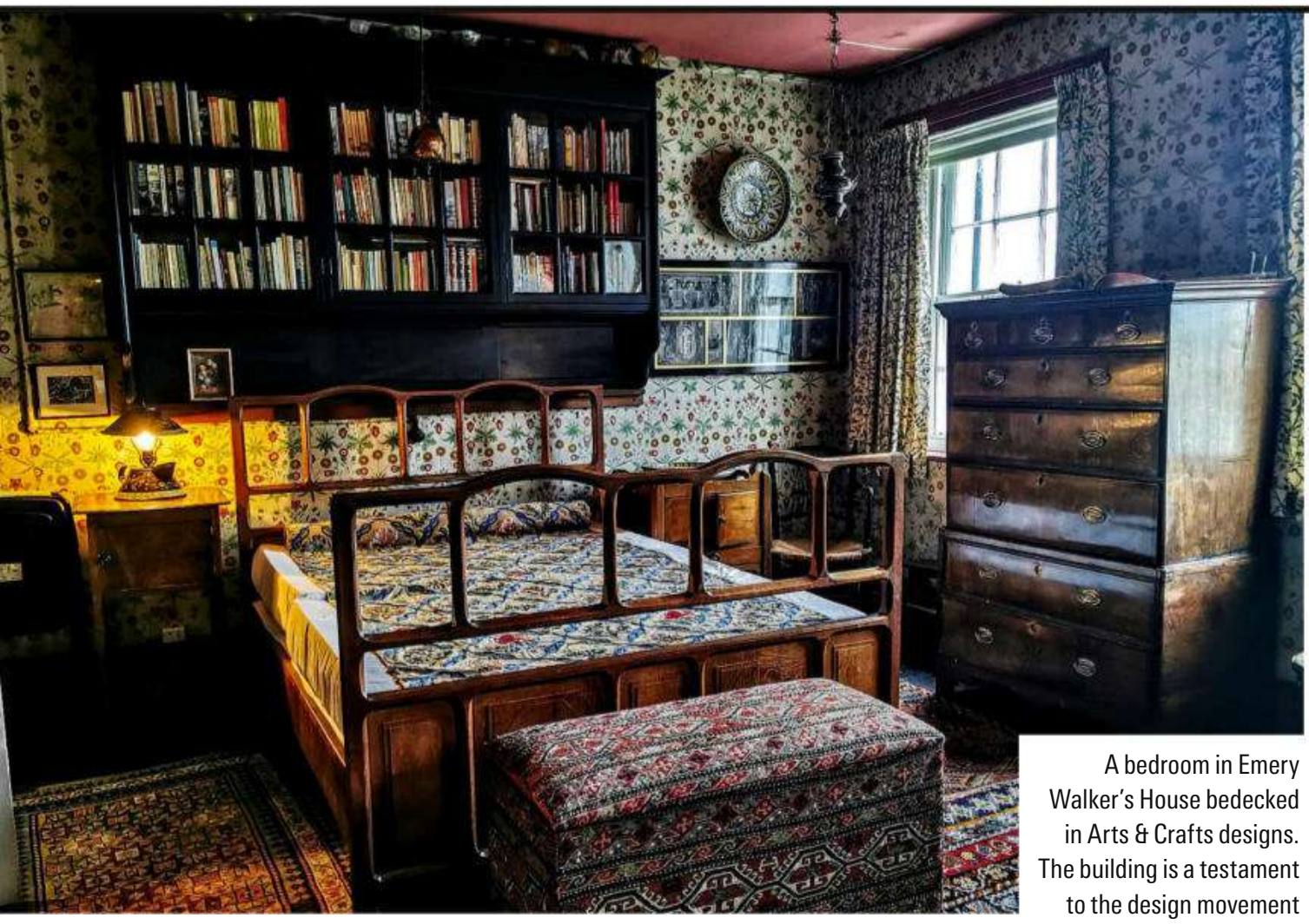
LISTEN

Protest pioneers

In September 1981, the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp was established by anti-nuclear activists. What effect did the demonstration have, not just on those who occupied land around the airbase (part of protests against cruise missiles being kept at the site), but on wider British politics and on the role of women in society?

Four decades on, these are questions that lie at the heart of an *Archive on 4* documentary presented by the theatre director Rebecca Mordan, who lived at Greenham as a child. The programme draws on the Greenham Women Everywhere project, which was co-founded by Mordan and is an oral history of the camp itself and the culture of political activism that it generated.

Archive on 4: The Greenham Effect
BBC Radio 4 / Saturday 4 September



A bedroom in Emery Walker's House bedecked in Arts & Crafts designs. The building is a testament to the design movement

VISIT

Beautiful books

The Victorian printer Emery Walker revolutionised the industry with his cutting-edge techniques, such as using photographs to create plates, instead of laboriously hand-carving them.

A new exhibition in the small drawing room of Emery Walker's House – one of the most authentic Arts & Crafts homes in Britain – gathers together stunning private press books, proof pages and a printing block created by William Morris. A high point is *The Odyssey*, translated by TE Lawrence, which was printed only a year before Walker's death. Today it is seen as one of the most exquisite private press books of the 20th century.

Emery Walker and the Private Press Movement
Emery Walker's House, London / Until 31 May 2022 / Booking required / *emerywalker.org.uk*

GETTY IMAGES/LUCINDA MACPHERSON

LISTEN

Uneasy neighbours

While England and Scotland have shared a monarch since the Union of the Crowns in 1603, it was more than a century before, to quote the Treaty of Union, the two were "United into One Kingdom by the Name of Great Britain". Why did the rulers of the two countries make this choice in 1707?

It's a question explored by Allan Little in the latest offering in Radio 4's *This Union* strand, which looks at each of the four home nations in turn at a time when the wider union is under huge strain. Empire building, the emergence of new industries and war all make an appearance in Little's narrative.

The former BBC foreign correspondent, who has reported on the emergence of new independent states in the Balkans and Africa, and in the aftermath of the Soviet Union, also considers the pressures that may lead to Scotland leaving the UK.

The series was recorded on location in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Linlithgow and the old battleground of Culloden.

Later this autumn, *This Union: Being Welsh* (Monday 25 October) finds Jeremy Bowen, the BBC's Middle East editor, reflecting on Welsh identity and the ways in which this is changing.

This Union: Two Kingdoms
BBC Radio 4 / Starts Monday 13 September

A c1935 print of the 1707 seal of Queen Anne, marking England's union with Scotland

ALAMY/ CLAIRE WOOD

WEEKLY TV & RADIO
Visit **historyextra.com** for weekly updates on upcoming television and radio programmes

"If you're locked in your house, the question of who lived there in the past becomes even more acute"

Broadcaster and historian **DAVID OLUSOGA** talks bricks-and-mortar genealogy as he discusses the new series of *A House Through Time*. He explains why Leeds makes a great location and the impact of lockdown on local history

Why have you chosen a house in Headingley, a suburb of Leeds, for the new series of *A House Through Time*?
We wanted to do Leeds because we wanted to find a house that had been absorbed into the city. We wanted to show how cities in the late 18th century and 19th century expanded enormously and swallowed up what were suburban or rural areas.

The house was built as part of the process by which Headingley became a place to which well-to-do people moved to escape from the pollution of central Leeds. What we see in the story of this house is the prosperity and the growth of the city. And what's really striking is that we have people from the early days of the house in the 1850s, right up until the middle of the 20th century, who were working in textiles. It shows the enormous importance of the textile trades to Leeds.

Without giving too much away, can you tell us a little bit about the house?
There are some tantalising clues in the fabric of the building that speak to its history and to the history of Leeds. One resident left their name literally carved into the fabric of the house – and an event that struck Leeds in the 20th century also left its mark on the building.

How did you research those who lived in the house?
The series works on triangulation. You find one piece of evidence that leads you to suspect there might be other evidence in another source, in a business directory or in a newspaper. Journalists call this jigsaw identification.

Were there any favourite moments from filming?
The element of this series that I like most is that the owners of the house today are people who've watched the previous series. They were really excited to have their house become the subject of *A House Through Time*, and so they threw themselves into the process.

More generally, why does the series connect so well with people?
For people who've done genealogy, for people who are interested in local history, the history of their house is a sort of logical project to engage in. It's very clear, from messages that people send me, that lockdown has seen an explosion of this participatory form of history. If you're locked within the four walls of your house, the question of who lived there in the past becomes even more acute. And it's such a fundamental question: houses are the most personal places to us, acutely private, and yet they come to us for the most part second-hand. H

A House Through Time, presented by David Olusoga, returns to BBC Two in early September

The Leeds residence that's the focus of the latest series of *A House Through Time*

TASTE

Mock apple pie

Although this dessert features no apples, Ritz crackers manage to deceive the tastebuds. Historically, crackers have often been used as a substitute when apples were in short supply. In the 1930s, when the US was in the grips of the Great Depression, a recipe for mock apple pie was featured on the back of Ritz cracker boxes. Its popularity grew during the Second World War, when apples were expensive.

INGREDIENTS

400g granulated sugar
400ml water
2 tsp cream of tartar
1 lemon
1 tsp vanilla extract
Ready-made shortcrust pastry
36 Ritz crackers, coarsely broken
½ tsp ground cinnamon
30g cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces

For the egg wash:
1 large egg white
2 tsp water

METHOD

1. In a large saucepan, combine the granulated sugar and cream of tartar.
2. Gradually whisk in the water. Place the saucepan over medium-high heat and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and continue to cook for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring frequently. The mixture should be reduced and will be syrupy in consistency.
3. Meanwhile, zest and squeeze the lemon. You will have about 1 to 2 teaspoons of finely grated lemon zest and about 2 tablespoons of juice.
4. Remove the sugar mixture from the heat and add the lemon zest, lemon juice and vanilla, then whisk to blend. Set the mixture aside to cool for about 30 minutes.
5. Roll the bottom crust out to about 11 inches in diameter. Then line a 9-inch pie dish with the pastry.
6. Put the broken crackers in the pie shell and toss gently with the cinnamon.
7. Preheat the oven to 220ºC. Pour the cooled sugar mixture over the crackers in the pie shell. Dot with the pieces of butter.
8. Roll out the top crust to about 11 inches in diameter. Cover the filling with the top crust. Seal and flute the edge as desired.
9. In a small bowl, whisk the egg white with the water. Brush the egg wash lightly over the top crust, avoiding the fluted edge.
10. Cut small slits in the top of the pie to let steam escape.
11. Bake the pie for 15 minutes and then cover with foil to prevent over-browning.
12. Bake again for about 15 minutes longer, or until the crust is golden brown.

Recipe by Diana Rattray, adapted from thespruceeats.com/mock-apple-pie-4173990

Ritz crackers and spices combine to give this pie its distinctive apple flavour

An onlooker watches the Twin Towers burn in *Surviving 9/11*. This is one of two new BBC TV documentaries exploring the terrorist attack 20 years on

WATCH

In the eye of the storm

It's 20 years since, on 11 September 2001, 19 Al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked four airliners and launched suicide attacks against the United States. The anniversary is being marked across different networks, but perhaps the standout is a new feature-length documentary that shows the immediate aftermath of the attacks from the perspective of those who had key roles in the US government.

Contributors to *9/11: Inside the President's War Room*, each giving exclusive interviews, include the former US president George W Bush; his vice-president, Dick Cheney; national security advisor Condoleezza Rice; and secretary of state Colin Powell. The interviews capture something of what it was like to make decisions at an extraordinary – and dangerous and tragic – moment in US history.

Elsewhere, *Surviving 9/11* (late August or September, BBC Two and iPlayer) takes a different perspective as Bafta-winning director Arthur Cary brings together 13 ordinary people – including survivors, first responders and family members of those who died – who found themselves central to events they couldn't fully comprehend at the time. What's it like to try to move on from a day the rest of the world so often revisits?

9/11: Inside the President's War Room
BBC One / September

» Turn to page 60 to read our feature on 9/11 and its legacy

SAMANTHA NOTT/BBC

VISIT

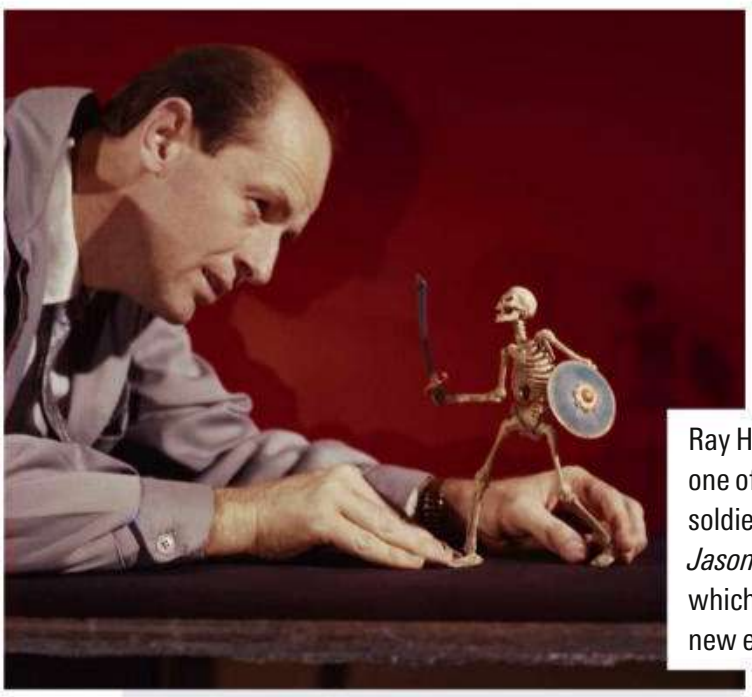
Shoots of knowledge

Timed to coincide with the Oxford Botanic Garden's 400th anniversary, a major new exhibition follows the fascinating evolution of plant sciences at the University of Oxford. It takes visitors from botany's beginnings, through to its refashioning as a respectable intellectual discipline at the end of the 17th century, and right up to the present day, examining the beneficial impacts botanical research has had on the world.

Through a mixture of dried plants, illustrations, manuscripts and rare books, botany is brought to life. A 12th-century illustration of the mandrake plant – a potent hallucinogen historically used in spiritual practices – is a particular highlight. The "Bobart the Elder Herbarium", a tome stuffed with dried specimens that became the foundation of the university's plant collections, also features.

Roots to Seeds
Bodleian Libraries, Oxford / Until 24 October / *visit.bodleian.ox.ac.uk*

A late 18th-century watercolour of a mandrake. This was one of the first plants to be cultivated in the Oxford Physic Garden



Ray Harryhausen with one of the skeleton soldiers featured in *Jason and the Argonauts*, which are on display in a new exhibition

THE RAY AND DIANA HARRYHAUSEN FOUNDATION/BODLEIAN LIBRARIES/ITV

VISIT

Movie magic

Special effects pioneer Ray Harryhausen inspired generations of filmmakers, from Tim Burton to George Lucas and Steven Spielberg. His creativity is highlighted in a new exhibition, with his famous model skeleton army from *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963) and Bubo the Owl, a mechanical bird sent from the gods in *Clash of the Titans* (1981), on display. As well as observing these fantastic creatures up close and seeing his initial sketches, visitors can fight the bronze giant Talos and the deadly Harpies on a green screen.

Ray Harryhausen: Titan of Cinema
Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art / Until Feb 2022 / Booking required / *nationalgalleries.org*

Hugh Quarshie, Steve Coogan and Sharlene Whyte play Neville Lawrence, DCI Clive Driscoll and Doreen Lawrence in *Stephen*

WATCH

Long fight for justice

The teenager Stephen Lawrence was murdered in a racially motivated attack in April 1993. In February 1999, a public enquiry branded the Metropolitan Police institutionally racist, in great part because of multiple failings in a case where nobody was convicted following initial investigations.

A powerful new three-part drama, a follow-up to *The Murder of Stephen Lawrence* (1999), picks up the story in 2006, and focuses on parents Doreen and Neville Lawrence as they work with a detective, DCI Clive Driscoll, to try to bring their son's killers to justice. Starring Sharlene Whyte (*Small Axe*), Hugh Quarshie (*Holby City*) and Steve Coogan (*Philomena*), it was scripted by Frank Cottrell Boyce and Joe Cottrell Boyce.

Stephen
ITV / Begins Late August. Catch-up on ITV Hub and Britbox

If walls could talk

Gloucester's rich past lives on in its architecture, from a picturesque Victorian shopfront that once inspired the pen of Beatrix Potter to a medieval stained-glass window that's the size of a tennis court. **JANINA RAMIREZ** selects five of its historical highlights

1 St Oswald's Priory

In the early 10th century, Danish-held territories in the north of England were raided, and the bones of the Northumbrian saint Oswald were brought south to Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians. The sacred relics were placed in an elaborate church she had built in her newly renovated city of Gloucester. She was also buried here, and her bones may still lie beneath its ruins.

2 The House of the Tailor of Gloucester

Tucked away on College Court is the shop Beatrix Potter drew to illustrate her "favourite book", *The Tailor of Gloucester*. While visiting her cousin in 1894, she heard the tale of a local tailor, John Pritchard, who left a waistcoat unfinished on Friday evening and returned to find it complete apart from one button hole; pinned to it was a note saying: "no more twist". This story inspired Beatrix to write her book about a team of helpful mice.

The house was built in the 16th century on the edge of the precinct of St Peter's Abbey, elements of which still straddle the lane today.

3 Blackfriars

Founded around 1239, Blackfriars is one of the most complete friaries to survive today, thanks to Thomas Bell, who bought the site after the Dissolution. He transformed it into a factory and mansion, preserving large parts of the original monastery. Though still enormous, what remains of the church is only half the size of the original. The scissor-braced roof in the dormitory, made with trees donated by Henry III from the royal forests, is a rare example. Also of unique importance is the scriptorium (library), still retaining the original carrels (desk cubicles) and doodles scratched into the stonework by monks.

Having survived the Dissolution, Blackfriars was turned into a factory and mansion

4 The Docks

The opening of the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal in 1827 enabled ships to bypass much of the river Severn, and Gloucester became an inland port. Recently modernised, with a new shopping centre, the riverside remains a remarkably complete example of a Victorian port. The Llanthony Warehouse is now home to the National Waterways Museum.

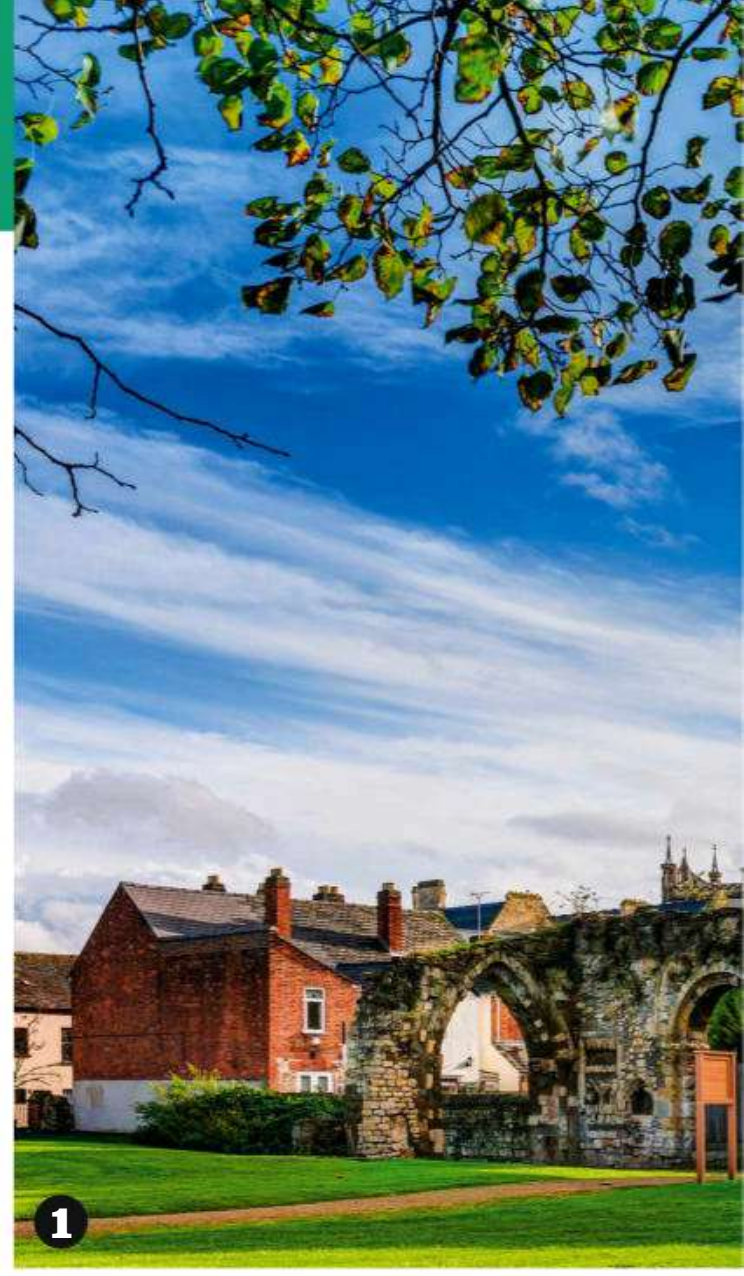
5 Gloucester Cathedral

A church has stood on this spot for over 1,300 years. Its rather stark Norman nave explodes into English Gothic at the choir, culminating in the magnificent stained-glass Crecy Window. When fitted, in the 1350s, it was the largest window in the world; it also features the earliest known image of someone playing golf.

Housed in the ambulatory below is the tomb of Edward II, who died in 1327 in suspicious circumstances. He was not given a royal burial in Westminster Abbey. Instead his son, Edward III, had Gloucester Cathedral remodelled so it would be fit for a king's resting place. Later in the 14th century, construction began on an extraordinary fan-vaulted cloister – the most perfect in England. H

Janina Ramirez is a historian, and president of the Gloucester History Festival, which runs from 4–19 September, and of which HistoryExtra is a media partner. *gloucesterhistoryfestival.co.uk*

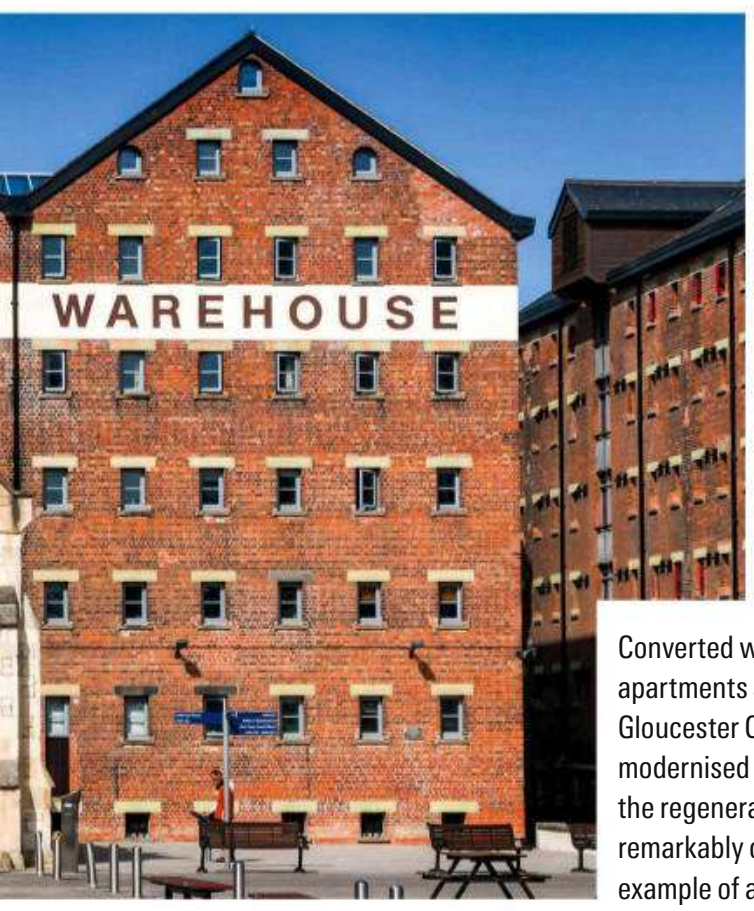
VISIT For more information on the city's attractions, head to **visitgloucester.co.uk**



ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

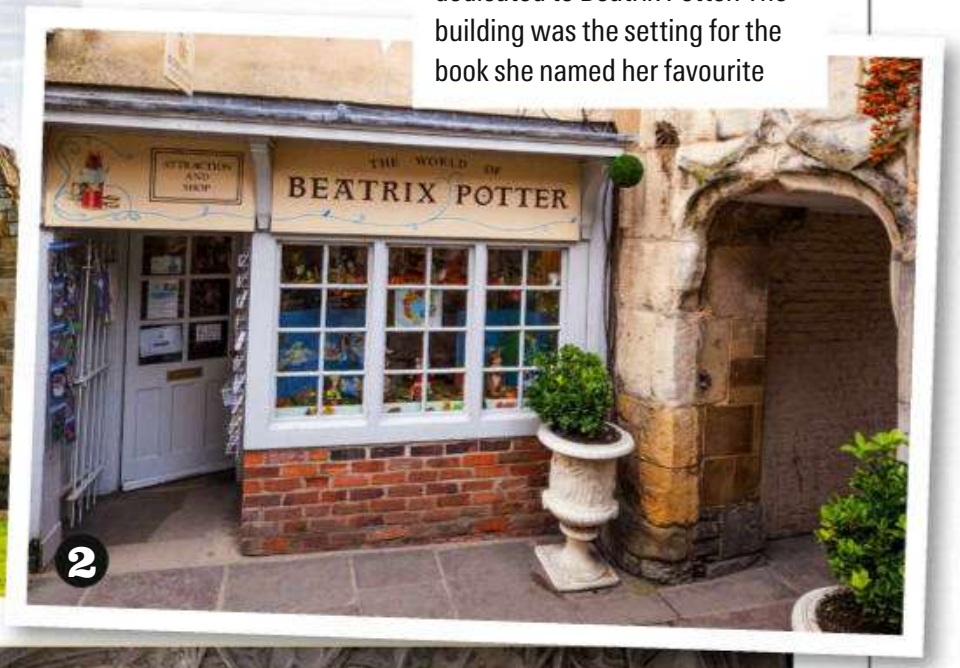
The ruins of St Oswald's Priory, with the tower of Gloucester Cathedral rising behind. The priory was built on the instructions of Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians

Canal boats moored at the city's historic docks. The Ship Canal was first opened in 1827, turning Gloucester into an inland port



Converted warehouse apartments and a church at Gloucester Quays, the city's modernised docks. Despite the regeneration, it is still a remarkably complete example of a Victorian port

An example of preserved medieval graffiti at Blackfriars. This face was carved by monks into stone



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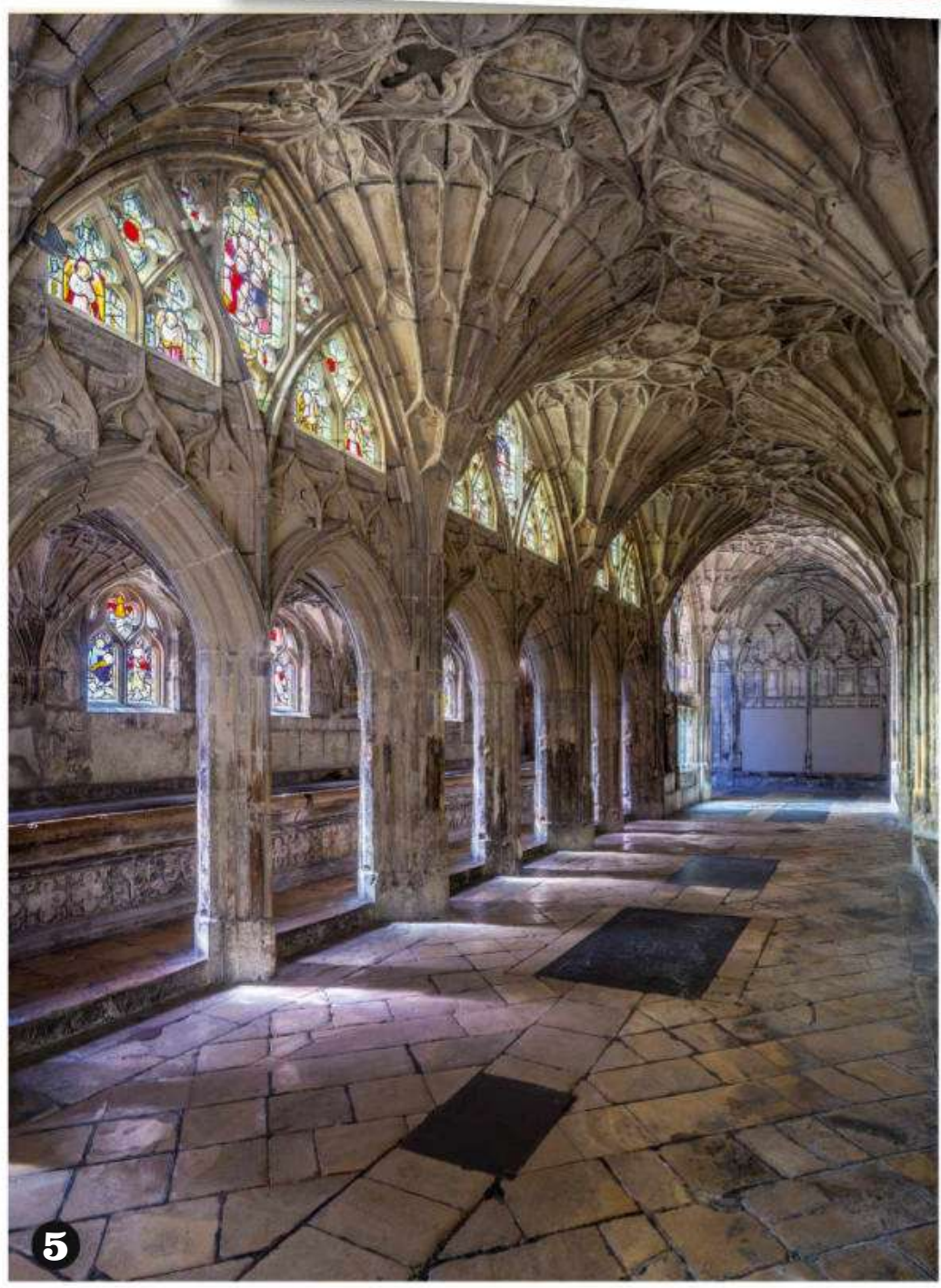
The House of The Tailor of Gloucester, a museum and shop dedicated to Beatrix Potter. The building was the setting for the book she named her favourite



5

Gloucester Cathedral's extraordinary medieval fan-vaulted cloister, described by Janina Ramirez as "the most perfect in England"

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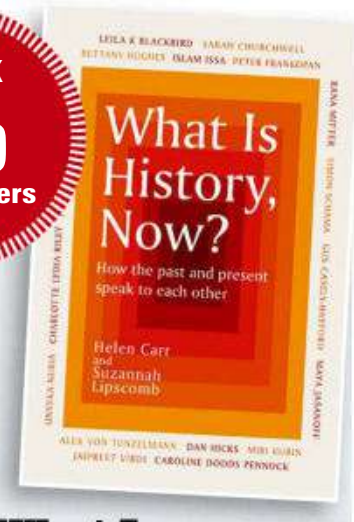
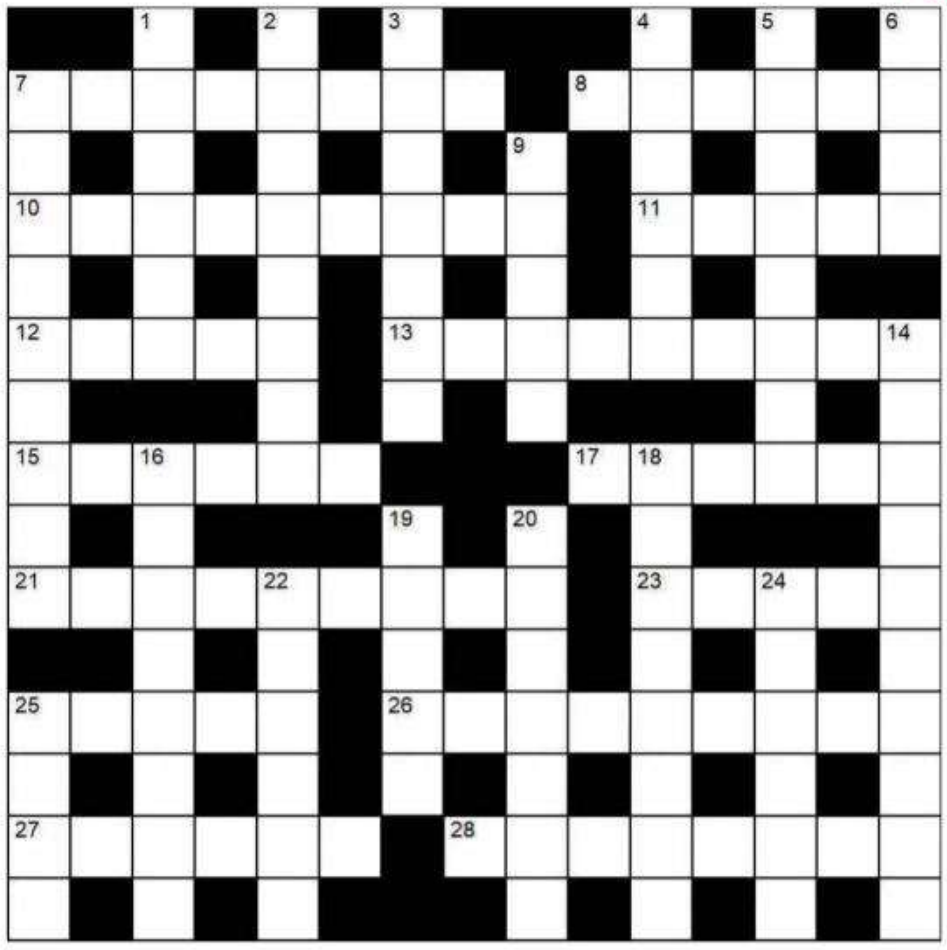


What Is History, Now?

By Helen Carr and Suzannah Lipscomb

Inspired by the influential text *What Is History?,* written by Helen Carr's great-grandfather EH Carr, this groundbreaking new collection grapples with a burning question: how should we interpret history today? A diverse mix of writers explore topics such as the history of faith and "rewriting" the past. *Read our interview with Helen and Suzannah on page 29.*



Across

7 Marcus ____, Roman emperor noted for his *Meditations* on Stoic philosophy (8)
8 Central Anatolian city captured by the Ottoman ruler Orhan Ghazi in 1354 (6)
10 Queen of Egypt in 14th century BC, the chief wife of Akhenaten (9)
11 Elizabeth ____, business name of the 20th-century founder of a cosmetics empire in the USA (5)
12 Hampshire town, scene of a 1643 battle that ended in victory for the parliamentarians over the royalists (5)
13 Organisation founded during the reign of Henry VIII, opening up to the public in 1635 and gaining its present name in 1784 (5,4)
15 The last ____ of Germany was Wilhelm II (reigned 1888–1918) (6)
17 British air force officer, deputy commander in chief under Eisenhower of the Allied Expeditionary Force (6)
21 Common term used to describe senator Joseph McCarthy's anti-communist campaign in 1950s US (5,4)
23 The ruins of Fountains Abbey, declared a World Heritage site in 1986, are near this small cathedral city (5)
25 Alternative Romanised spelling of the name of the sacred scripture of Islam (5)
26 Leader of the British Labour party who in 1961 managed to reverse a previous conference decision upholding unilateral nuclear disarmament (9)
27 Surname of the advocate of birth control who founded Britain's first clinic for contraception advice (6)
28 City that was under siege for several years during the Bosnian War of the 1990s (8)

Down

1 Surname of the Palestinian leader who was a joint winner of the 1994 Nobel prize (6)
2 Italian city dominated by the Medici family for three centuries (8)
3 Family name of the French brothers who invented an early motion picture camera and projector, the Cinématographe (7)
4 József ____, historian and former director of Budapest's Semmelweis Museum, who became prime minister of Hungary in 1990 (6)
5 Seventh-century king of East Anglia, thought to be the occupant of the Sutton Hoo burial ship (8)
6 City in Normandy in which William the Conqueror is buried (4)
7 Evangelical martyr burned at the stake in July 1546 for her "heretical" beliefs (4,5)
9 Country in north Africa, location of the colony of Cyrenaica established by the ancient Greeks (5)
14 British naval commander made a baron after victory in the 1798 battle of the Nile (4,6)
16 Agency formed in 1923, with its original HQ in Vienna, to facilitate co-operation between nations in solving crimes (8)
18 Italian civilisation that flourished c800–100 BC, and whose culture greatly influenced its successor, Rome (8)
19 The Great ____ was a series of show trials (and closed ones) in the late 1930s that eliminated Stalin's rivals and critics (5)
20 Irish monk who founded a church and monastery on Lindisfarne, and became its first bishop in 635 (2,5)
22 Prehistoric circular enclosures, sometimes with stone or wooden uprights (6)
24 Nickname for a member of the world's first modern police force, after the home secretary who established it (6)
25 Ancient kingdom of the Nile Valley, based in the south of the ancient region of Nubia (4)

Which cathedral city is near to Fountains Abbey, pictured here? *(23 across)*

Compiled by **Eddie James**

HOW TO ENTER

● Open to residents of the UK (& Channel Islands). Post entries to ***BBC History Magazine*, October 2021 Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA** or email them to ***october2021@historycomps.co.uk*** by 5pm on **29 September 2021**. ● Entrants must supply full name, address and phone number. The winners will be the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing time. Winners' names will appear in the December 2021 issue. By entering, participants agree to be bound by the terms and conditions shown in full in the box below. Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) will use personal details in accordance with the Immediate Privacy Policy at *immediatemedia.co.uk/privacy-policy/privacy/* ● Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) would love to send you newsletters, together with special offers and other promotions. If you would not like to receive these, please write 'NO INFO' on your entry. ● Branded BBC titles are licensed from or published jointly with BBC Studios (the commercial arm of the BBC). Please tick here ❑ if you'd like to receive regular newsletters, special offers and promotions from BBC Studios by email. Your information will be handled in accordance with the BBC Studios privacy policy: *bbcstudios.com/privacy. – bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidance/code-of-conduct*

Solution to our August 2021 crossword

Across 3 Spartacus 9 Marathon 10 Astrid 11 Frida Kahlo 12 Linz 13/18 Isabel Allende 15 Reeve 19 Keynes 21 Mann 22 Land League 25/1 Porton Down 26 Rievaulx 27 Jennie Lee 28 Royce
Down 1 Dean Rusk 2 Weald 4 Punch 5 Roanoke 6 Artillery 7 Unions 8 Shekel 14 Babington 15/17 Redbeard 16 Republic 19 Keller 20 Lahore 23 Norse 24 Alamo

Six winners of *Unwell Women*
H Anstey, Norfolk; E Askew, Dorset; A Ayzenband, London; S Bond, Hampshire; C Goodliffe, South Yorkshire; G Shisler, Greater London

CROSSWORD COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS

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NEXT MONTH

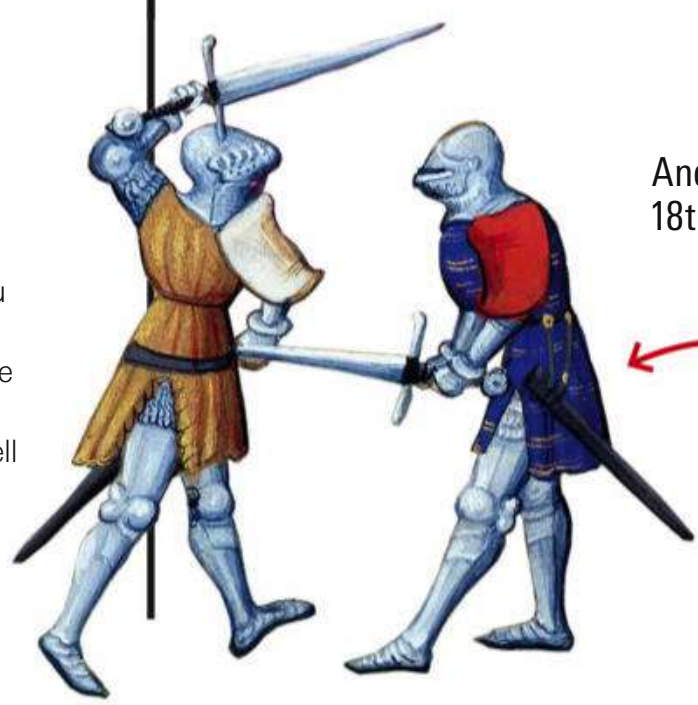
November issue on sale 30 September 2021

Warring queens

Susan Doran re-examines the fatal rivalry between Elizabeth I and her cousin, Mary, Queen of Scots

Lighting up the past

Rachel Hurdley explains how the history of windows reflects changing societies



George III: tyrant king?

Andrew Roberts argues that the 18th-century monarch has been misrepresented

Medieval duels

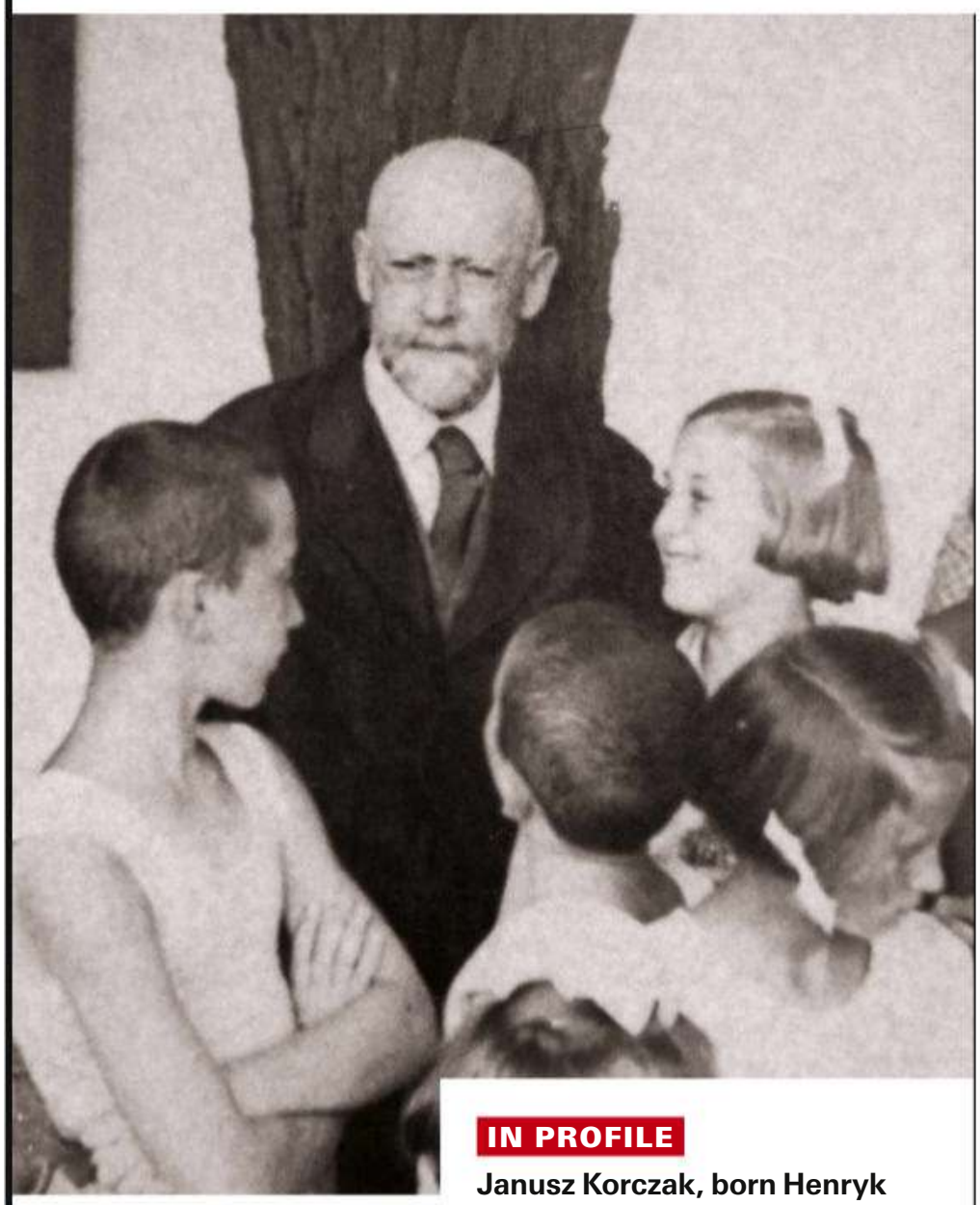
Hannah Skoda discusses examples of trial by combat in the Middle Ages

MY HISTORY HERO

BBC journalist and broadcaster ***Reeta Chakrabarti*** *chooses*

Janusz Korczak

1878–1942



Janusz Korczak with children at his orphanage in Warsaw, c1940. "He sacrificed his life, refusing to abandon his children," says Reeta Chakrabarti

IN PROFILE

Janusz Korczak, born Henryk Goldszmit, was a Polish Jewish educator and children's author, and the founder and director of two Warsaw orphanages, one for Jewish children. He insisted on accompanying the Jewish children to the ghetto and then to Treblinka extermination camp, where all were murdered by the Nazis. A monument to Korczak stands in the Jewish Cemetery on Okopowa Street in Warsaw.

> "He suffered deprivation and danger for the sake of the children in his care, and chose to die with them rather than save himself"

Reeta Chakrabarti is a journalist and broadcaster, and a regular presenter of the news on BBC One and the BBC News Channel

When did you first hear about Janusz Korczak? I wandered into an exhibition about him in Rome, and was overcome by the heroism of this ordinary man. I say ordinary – he was actually quite well known as a children's author and an educator, but nothing can have prepared him for the decisions he had to take.

What kind of man was he? Korczak trained as a medical doctor, but became a children's author and teacher. He ran two orphanages in Warsaw – one for Jewish children, the other for Catholics. A liberal and progressive thinker, he set up a children's "republic" in the Jewish orphanage, with its own parliament, court and newspaper. He suffered deprivation and danger for the sake of the children in his care, and ultimately chose to die with them, despite being given the opportunity to save himself.

What made Korczak a hero? His bravery and his loyalty to the children. After the Germans created the Warsaw Ghetto in 1940, Korczak's Jewish orphanage was forced to move into it. He went with the children, though he'd been offered shelter elsewhere. He stayed with them until August 1942, when he was sent to Treblinka with some 200 children and staff. They were never heard of again; it's assumed they all perished in the gas chambers.

What was Korczak's finest hour? When he led the children to the train to Treblinka, described movingly by eyewitnesses. The composer Władysław Szpilman recalled that Korczak told the orphans to be glad, because they were going to the countryside and would be free of the suffocating city. He wanted to spare them the terror of death.

Does he deserve greater recognition in the UK? Yes! Korczak should be remembered alongside people such as Sir Nicholas Winton, Raoul Wallenberg and Oskar Schindler. They managed to save lives, but Korczak sacrificed his, refusing to abandon his children on their final journey.

Can you see any parallels between his life and yours? I could never conceive of being put to the same test. But I love children, as he must have done. Also, in the Ghetto, the children performed *The Post Office*, a play by Rabindranath Tagore, who is revered in Bengal, where my family come from. That makes me feel connected in a tenuous sort of way.

What would you ask Korczak if you could meet him? Did he ever consider trying to save himself? What did he actually say to the children before their last journey together? Was he able to stay with them until the bitter end? H

LISTEN

In Radio 4's **Great Lives**, guests choose inspirational figures: *bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qxsb*

BBC RADIO 4

Reeta Chakrabarti was talking to York Membery

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BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE

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Take part in the research online by visiting bit.ly/history-magazine

We look forward to hearing from you!

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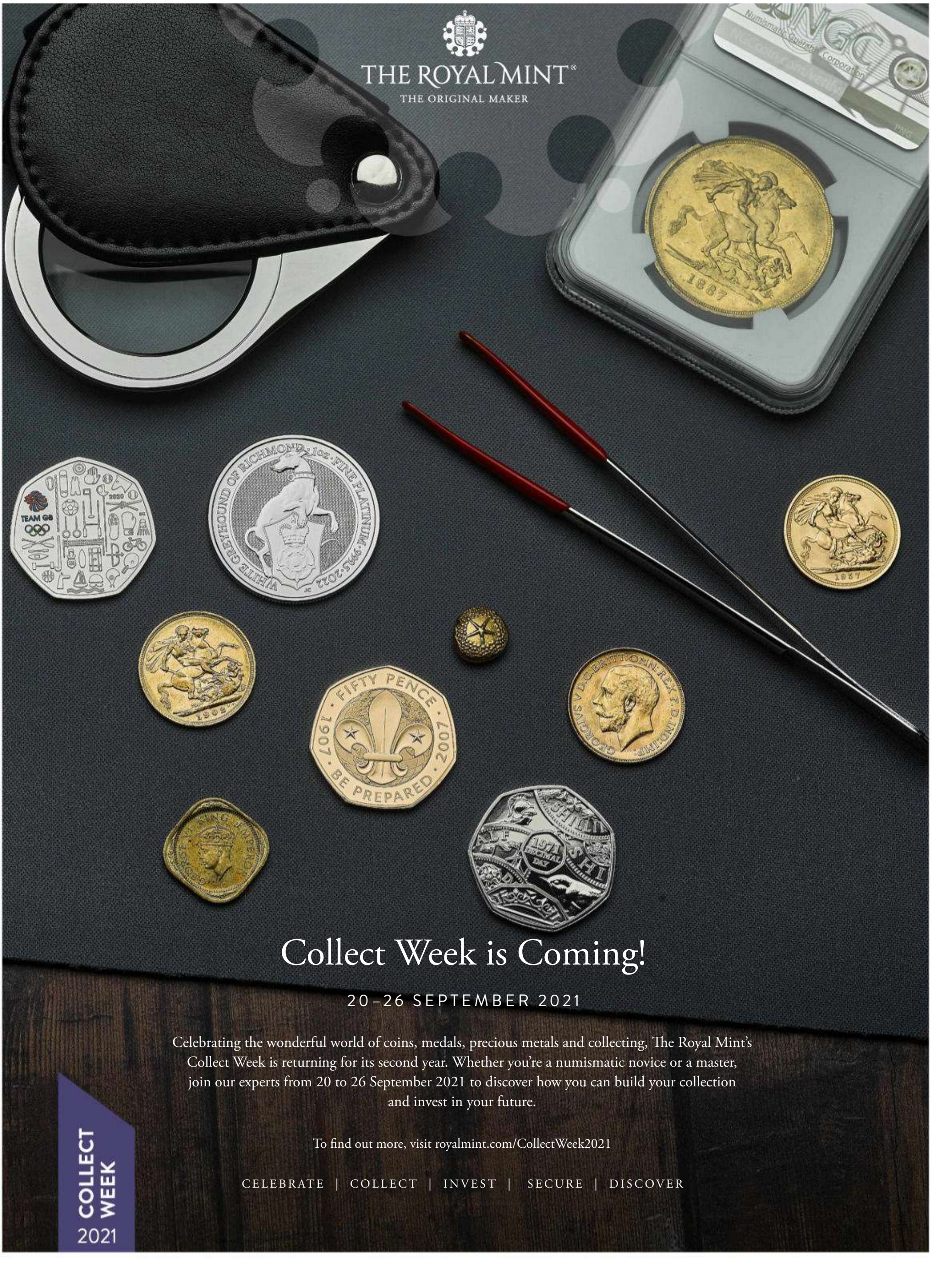
* T&Cs apply and are available from the questionnaire introduction page. The questionnaire will be available to complete until 11.59pm on Sunday 26 September 2021.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FIFTY PENCE
1907
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1971
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20–26 SEPTEMBER 2021
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2021